



THE SMALL WORLD OF INFORMATION OF NEW FEMALE  
REFUGEES IN TURKU, FINLAND

Master's Thesis

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## ABSTRACT

With the increasing number of refugees coming to Finland in recent years, the dilemma of an effective social and cultural integration of newcomers is in the highlights. The way the newcomers choose to integrate in the Finnish society is closely linked with their preferences of seeking and sharing information. Social networks assuredly help the newcomers to integrate in the Finnish society from the social and the cultural perspective. The overall aim of this study is to highlight the importance of 'information in new female refugees' life, in which they possess specific types of information needs, utilize certain types of social networks to acquire information and their motivation for forming a *small-world of information* around them.

To reach these objectives, a combination of focus group and semi-structured interviews - with eight female refugees from Iraq, Syria and Somalia - were conducted for the data collection, and a thematic analysis approach was adopted to analyze the results. The city of Turku situated in the South-West of Finland is selected for conducting the study. To answer the research questions, the findings were examined through a theoretical framework derived from the five theories and the models including Chatman's (1992) theory of small-world, Habermas (1992) theory of life-world, Caidi, Allard, and Quirke's (2010) model of migrant settlement stages, Berry's (1997) theory of acculturation and Chatman's (1996) theory of information poverty.

The findings of the study reveal that the newcomers possess two levels of information, i.e. small-world and open-world of information, in which they join distinct types of social networks for seeking certain kinds of information. The small-world of information is largely adopted by the newcomers and contains co-ethnic social networks. The major factor motivating them to follow the pattern of 'Separation' and build a 'Small-world' of information - is the cultural similarities among co-ethnic connections. The small-world of information is valued for personal and help-seeking information needs during the integration process,

while the open-world of information is considered useful for seeking general and practical information needs in the early settlement stage.

The refugees' interest towards their own culture and ethnic people may create a risk for social isolation and information poverty for such minorities and may consequently lead to an ineffective integration into the Finnish society. A proper cultural integration plan, together with government and private organizational support, is needed for an effective social and cultural integration of new refugees in the country.

**Keywords:** female refugees, information practices, small-world of information, social networks, cultural integration, Finland.

## Table of Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....</b>                             | <b>1</b>  |
| 1.1 AREA OF RESEARCH.....   | 1         |
| 1.2 OVERALL AIM OF THESIS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....               | 1         |
| 1.3 STRUCTURE OF THESIS.....  | 3         |
| <b>2. CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>                     | <b>4</b>  |
| 2.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION .....                                      | 4         |
| 2.2 INFORMATION BEHAVIOR AND REFUGEES .....                         | 5         |
| 2.2.1 Information Needs and Sources .....                           | 6         |
| 2.3 JUSTIFICATION ON ‘GENDER’ PERSPECTIVE.....                      | 9         |
| 2.3.1 Gender Perspective and Human Information Behavior .....       | 9         |
| 2.3.2 Gender Perspective and Immigrants’ Information Behavior ..... | 10        |
| 2.3.3 Gender Perspective and Social Psychology .....                | 11        |
| 2.4 THE ‘SMALL-WORLD’ AND ‘LIFE-WORLD’ OF INFORMATION .....         | 11        |
| 2.4.1 The Information World.....                                    | 12        |
| 2.4.2 Habermas’ Theory of ‘Life-World’ .....                        | 12        |
| 2.4.3 Chatman’s Theory of ‘Small-World’ .....                       | 13        |
| 2.4.4 The Concept of ‘Cosmopolitan’ and ‘Locals’ .....              | 14        |
| 2.4.5 The Concept of ‘Folk Society’ .....                           | 15        |
| 2.4.6 The Concept of ‘Location’ .....                               | 15        |
| 2.4.7 The Concept of ‘Information Poverty’ .....                    | 15        |
| 2.5 THE SOCIAL NETWORKS .....                                       | 17        |
| 2.6 THE INTEGRATION.....  | 20        |
| 2.6.1 The Social Integration .....                                  | 21        |
| 2.6.2 The Cultural Integration.....                                 | 22        |
| 2.6.3 The Refugees’ Integration in Finland.....                     | 24        |
| 2.7 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....                                       | 27        |
| 2.8 CHAPTER CONCLUSION .....  | 28        |
| <b>3. CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....</b>                      | <b>30</b> |
| 3.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION .....                                      | 30        |
| 3.2 QUALITATIVE METHOD.....   | 31        |
| 3.3 GATHERING DATA.....   | 31        |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| 3.3.1 Step One: Approaching the Subject.....                  | 32        |
| 3.3.2 Step Two: Focus Group Discussion.....                   | 34        |
| 3.3.3 Step Three: Interviews.....                             | 36        |
| 3.4 ANALYZING THE DATA: THEMATIC ANALYSIS APPROACH.....       | 37        |
| 3.4.1 Stage One .....   | 38        |
| 3.4.2 Stage Two .....   | 39        |
| 3.4.3 Stage Three and Four.....                               | 39        |
| 3.4.4 Stage Five.....   | 39        |
| 3.5 RELIABILITY, VALIDITY AND LIMITATIONS.....                | 40        |
| 3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .....                              | 42        |
| 3.7 CHAPTER CONCLUSION .....                                  | 42        |
| <b>4. CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS.....</b>        | <b>44</b> |
| 4.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION .....                                | 44        |
| 4.2 INFORMATION NEEDS AND SOURCES OF NEWCOMERS .....          | 44        |
| 4.2.1 General Information Needs and Sources.....              | 45        |
| 4.2.2 Official Information Needs and Sources .....            | 48        |
| 4.2.3 Personal Information Needs and Sources.....             | 49        |
| 4.3 THE SOCIAL NETWORKS OF NEWCOMERS.....                     | 53        |
| 4.3.1 The Multi-National Networks.....                        | 53        |
| 4.3.2 The Co-Ethnic Networks .....                            | 57        |
| 4.4 THE MOTIVATING FACTORS.....                               | 61        |
| 4.4.1 'Culture' as a Factor.....                              | 61        |
| 4.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION .....                                  | 68        |
| <b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION .....</b>                            | <b>69</b> |
| 5.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION .....                                | 69        |
| 5.2 THE INFORMATION WORLD OF NEW REFUGEES.....                | 70        |
| 5.2.1 The Small-World of Information.....                     | 71        |
| 5.2.2 The Open World of Information.....                      | 76        |
| 5.3 THE PERSONA OF 'SARA' .....                               | 80        |
| 5.4 DRAWBACKS OF ESTABLISHING SMALL-WORLD OF INFORMATION..... | 84        |
| 5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS .....                                     | 86        |
| 5.6 CHAPTER CONCLUSION .....                                  | 87        |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>6. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS .....</b> | <b>89</b> |
| <b>7. REFERENCES .....</b>                 | <b>91</b> |
| <b>8. APPENDIXES .....</b>                 | <b>98</b> |
| 8.1 QUESTIONNAIRES.....                    | 98        |
| 8.2 OTHER APPENDIXES.....                  | 101       |
| APPENDIX 1.....                            | 101       |

## LIST OF FIGURES

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Figure 1 Outline of Thesis Structure.....  | 3  |
| Figure 2 Outline of Chapter 2 .....  | 4  |
| Figure 3 Outline of the Chapter 3.....   | 30 |
| Figure 4 Outline of Chapter 4 .....  | 44 |
| Figure 5 Outline of Chapter 5 .....  | 69 |
|  |    |
| Figure 2. 1 A Guide for developing the Immigrant Settlement Services.....        | 21 |
| Figure 2. 2 Berry's Model of Acculturation .....                                 | 23 |
| Figure 2. 3 International Protection Applications Data .....                     | 25 |
| Figure 2. 4 The citizenship statistics for refugee's application in 2015/2016 .. | 25 |
| Figure 2. 5 The conceptual framework of the study.....                           | 28 |
|  |    |
| Figure 3. 1 The summary of data collection process.....                          | 43 |
|  |    |
| Figure 5. 1 Berry's (1997) model of acculturation strategy .....                 | 74 |
| Figure 5. 2 The Cultural Similarities relate to Berry & Chatman Theories .....   | 74 |
| Figure 5. 3 'The Symbolic Presentation of Sara's Information-world' .....        | 81 |
| Figure 5. 4 Berry's Acculturation Model .....                                    | 84 |
| Figure 5. 5 Summary of conceptual framework of the study.....                    | 87 |

## **LIST OF TABLES**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Table 2. 1 Information sources identified by settlement stages.....     | 9  |
| Table 3. 1 The overview of Interviewees' Details.....                   | 34 |
| Table 4. 1 Types of information needs and sources of Participants ..... | 52 |
| Table 4. 2 The summary of participant's responses.....                  | 67 |
| Table 5. 1 (Level 1: 'The Small-world of Information') .....            | 76 |
| Table 5. 2 (Level 2: 'The Open-world of Information').....              | 79 |



## **1. Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Area of Research**

The refugees and immigrants have become a large group of the society in many parts of Europe, including the Nordic countries. Finland is relatively new in the practice of welcoming refugees as compared to the other countries such as Sweden, Norway and Denmark. The refugees have been the subject of different studies in many disciplines of economic, political, health, settlement, crisis and other issues, but there is little research on information behavior and practices of refugees in the host countries and particularly in Finland (Eskola et al, 2017). Therefore, my study can effectively provide some support to the academic information behavioral literature and can help scholars and information professionals to understand the information practices of new refugees, from a Finnish perspective. It can further provide some support for theory building, comparison studies and future directions for research in this area. Besides academicians, the study can also serve the policy makers in the immigration field, rule developers in the refugees' settlement sector, social welfare, governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), refugee reception centers and other relevant bodies to help the processes involved in their settlement, integration and social inclusion.

### **1.2 Overall aim of thesis and Research Questions**

The thesis addresses the issue of new female refugees' world of information, by examining some aspects of their information behavior, including their information needs, their information sources, the social networks they utilize to attain the information and the motivating factors for building certain social networks.

The 'Refugees' crisis in Finland' or the 'Finland Integration Plan for Refugees' are examples of some hot headlines of Finnish newspapers recently. However, what is the inside picture of the refugees' situation when it comes to 'integration' in the host society. The 'Easier said than done' phrase relevantly shows that it is very easy to make some integration policies on paper and difficult to implement in

practice. The refugees are somehow expected to adjust and adapt to the Finnish culture, when being provided with help concerning jobs, finances, living allowances, education and language learning, medical and travelling allowances etc. These are undoubtedly necessary parts of newcomers' settlement in Finland, but the true 'social and cultural integration' demands more. Having departed from their own families, homes, traditions and culture affects refugees' social life and their information seeking and sharing behaviors. During my short stay in Finland, I could notice that the refugees, mainly from the Muslim countries (Iraq, Somalia, Syria etc.), are not well integrated in the Finnish society socially, rather they have built their own communities. By conducting this research, I humbly attempt to understand what type of social networks they possess and what the possible reasons are for selecting them. I am particularly interested in exploring the information behavior of the *female* refugees. The information needs of women are categorized differently than the needs of men and are considered important to be valued during the settlement process in the host country. The city of Turku in Finland has been selected for conducting the study.

The three research questions are as follow:

**Research Question 1 (RQ1):**

What are the information needs and sources of new female refugees in Finland?

(This question finds out what the individual information needs are at different stages of settlement and what the sources used by new refugees are in each stage)

**Research Question 2 (RQ2):**

What are the types of social networks that female refugees use for seeking or sharing information in Finland?

(This question treats 'Social networks' as one of the sources of information for new refugees that they use to seek and share certain types of information needs)

**Research Question 3 (RQ3):**

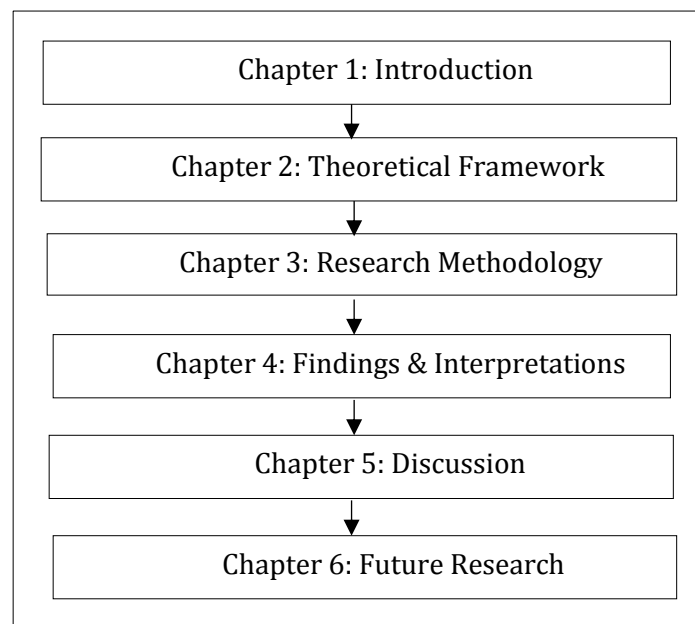
What are the motivating factors for the new female refugees to select certain types of social networks?

(Here, my *primary* focus is to understand the factor/s that force the new refugees to choose certain types of social communities (such as their own ethnicity and their own cultural networks) in detail, with a *little* focus on exploring the impact of the factor/s in choosing other types of social communities (such as networks with mixed nationalities and multi-cultures).

### 1.3 Structure of thesis

A theoretical overview and the conceptual framework of this study are presented in Chapter 2. Each chapter consists a brief introduction and a short conclusion. Chapter 3 deals with the research methodology (techniques), Chapter 4 shows the Findings and Interpretations of the study participants' scripts, Chapter 5 discusses the findings and highlights the concepts of 'small-world' and 'open-world' of information. Chapter 5 presents some recommendations and lastly, in Chapter 6, some suggestions for future research are mentioned (Refer to Figure 1.3).

**Figure 1 Outline of Thesis Structure**

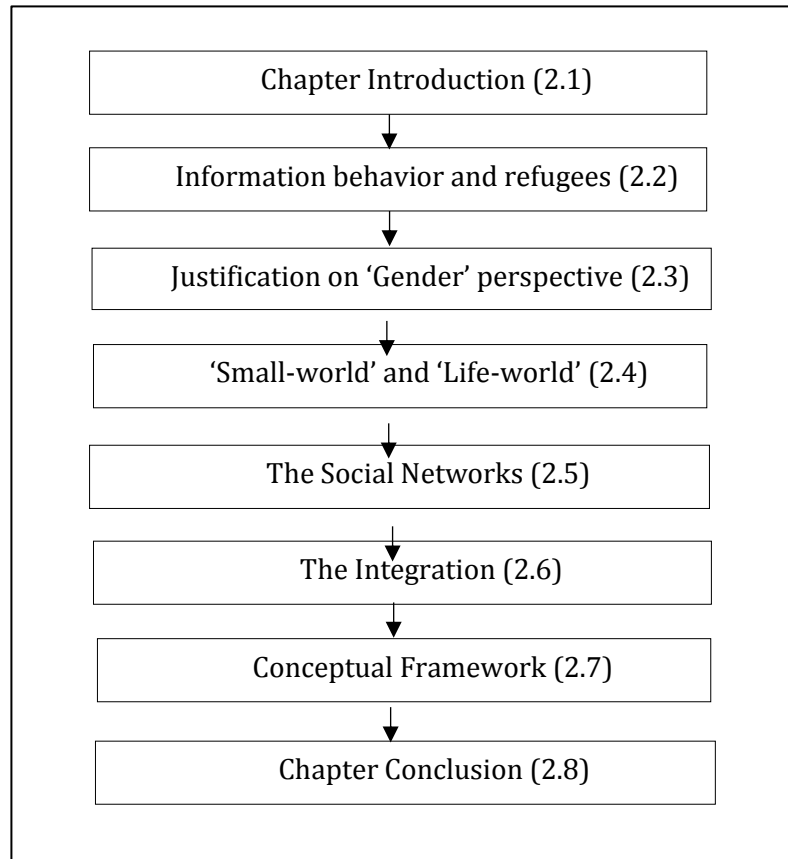


## 2. Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter explains literature review upon which this thesis is built, in which the process consists of eight different sections (Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2 Outline of Chapter 2**



Section 2.2 presents some relevant literature of the human information behavior in context of immigrants and refugees. Section 2.3 reveals previous literature about the importance of studying the 'gender' perspective in relation to the immigrants' information behavior. The literature helps in strengthening the research objective of studying the *female* new refugees specifically. Section 2.4 explains the theories of the 'small-world' and the 'life-world' of information and other supporting concepts relevant to these theories. Section 2.5 discusses the importance of social networks for the immigrants and refugees. Section 2.6 discourses about the types

of integration and refugees' integration in Finland, to support the discussion of the thesis. Section 2.7 presents the overall conceptual framework of the thesis in relation to literature review. The chapter concludes with the summary in section 2.8.

## **2.2 Information behavior and refugees**

Within the literature of human information behavior, the term 'information behavior' and 'information practice' refer to explain the people's activities related to their information needs. Savolainen (2007) considered these terms differently in various meanings in some situations. The terms are difficult to isolate as a separate phenomenon. The information practices emphasize on the role of contextual factors of information seeking, utilizing and sharing as distinct from the individualist approach (Savolainen, 1995; 2007). Caidi et al. (2010) mentioned the information practices as an individual's activities of collecting information on everyday basis and there is no interpretation of information behavior without an understanding of current life situation. The human information behavior helps to solve the problems and to continue with evolved information seeking in daily life. Erdelez (1996, p.412) highlighted that people often find the information accidentally with no intention of seeking certain information and may involve in accidental encountering. The information behavior is closely linked to information literacy, which refers to a set of survival skills in information age to find, evaluate, use and share the information effectively.

When talking about information experiences, information literacy skills of immigrants and role of libraries, there are few relevant studies in the literature. Such as, Aamitaival (2010) has discussed the relationship between immigrants' integration experiences and information literacy level of Kurdish and Russian women in Finland. Caidi and Allard (2005) have explored the role of libraries in the social inclusion of newcomers in Canada. Sirikul and Dorner (2016) have explained barriers for the Thai immigrants to New Zealand from using library services. Khoir et al. (2017) have assorted that the use of public library services help in making a social capital development of the Asian immigrants in Australia. Similarly, Quirke (2011) has used the Caidi and Allard's (2005) framework to

study the experiences related to information-seeking of young Afghani immigrants in Toronto. Additionally, various additional researchers have studied the role of information practices of immigrants in their settlement in a new host country (Erdelez & McKechnie, 2005; Fisher & Julien, 2009, Qayyum et al, 2014; Khoir and Koronios, 2015, Fisher; Mai, 2016, p. 14; Khoir, 2016; Shankar et al, 2016). However, the information behavior of *refugees* might be considered different from the *immigrants*, as they belong to different demographic, social, emotional, economic and political background. There is not a sufficient literature available for information practices of 'refugees', except a few significant studies (Bernard, 1976; Caidi et al, 2010, p. 520). For instance, Lloyd et al (2013) have studied the information literacy practices of refugees in Australia, while Nekesa and Odong (2017) have explored the role of public libraries in the context of information needs and information seeking behavior of women refugees in Uganda. Melnyk's (2017) study has mentioned about information practices of Afghan refugees and their communication strategies in integration system in Sweden. Further, Oduntan (2017) has showed his interest in exploring the personalized information needs of refugees on a situational level and during the integration process.

Concerning the case of Finland, Eskola's et al. (2017) article has revealed that Finland has arranged several reception centers to receive, accommodate and integrate the refugees and migrants' community in different cities and provide required information for their settlement. There is still a need to reach the information needs and practices of refugees, to better understand the integration situation in Finland.

### **2.2.1 Information needs and sources**

Caidi and colleagues (2010) reported a lack of empirical studies of how the new immigrants find and use information. However, they have found a few studies of information needs of new migrants addressing their pre-migration needs (Shoham & Strauss, 2008), needs of the younger population, such as Sudanese youth in London Ontario (Silvio, 2006 cited in Caidi et al, 2010, p. 500 ), newly arrived South Asian immigrants in Canada, Asian mothers giving birth in New Zealand and

Hispanic farm workers in the United States of America (Fisher, Durrance & Bouch Hinton, 2004).

Regarding the nature of information needs, Savolainen (1995, 2007) introduced problem-specific information needs in everyday contexts of immigrants. The problem-specific needs are related to the solution of an individuals' issues of special tasks, (Savolainen, 2008) such as language information (training, interpretation and translation), housing information, employment information (job skills, job advertisements, training and certificates to foreign professionals), information about social connections (mentoring, community companies, professional associations, volunteering opportunities), health information, education-related information, legal information, information about workplace safety, information about transportation and information about banking system. In addition, newcomers also face other specific difficulties concerning emotional instability, stress, social isolation and homesickness in a new environment.

Caidi et al. (2010) used the term 'immigrant settlement' as a central concept to immigration and information needs of newcomers' studies. Settlement is the process of immigrants' adjustment in a new home country, which involves various activities of searching housing, employment, schools for children, healthcare and acquisition of English skills. Here, the term 'settlement' is opposed to the 'integration', which refers to cultural and behavioral adaptation of newcomers (Caidi, Allard & Dechief, 2008).

Caidi and Allard (2005) mentioned Mwarigha's (2002) classification of three stages in settlement process of newcomers, which is useful for my thesis. In the first immediate stage, the new immigrants' needs consist of insistent matters, such as food, shelter, orientation about the place, language interpretation and basic communication instructions. In the second intermediate level, newcomers' needs include access to local municipal, legal, health, employment and housing system and services. The last stage of settlement highlights immigrants' needs about integrating into the host society, unbiasedly and equally by participating in the host country's economic, social, political and cultural life (Mwarigha, 2002, p.9).

The 'integration stage' requires indefinite period and demands more diverse and individual information needs of immigrants. The integration service process is complex and does vary on individuals and their personal situations. Therefore, there is a need for a person-centered integration services for refugees at this stage. Viewing refugees' integration plan from the lens of information behavior, the immigrants possess more customized and individualized information needs and experience different sources to seek situational information. Oduntan (2017) agreed on the view that immigrants need more tacit types of information at this stage, which is gained by the social interactions, connections and members networks in their geographic community. Hence, this thesis mainly deals with the information needs in 'integration' stage of refugees' settlement in Finland and explores different types of 'social networking' modes as a source of their needs.

Caidi and Allard (2005) suggested that information needs of new immigrants in the settlement stages do not differ hugely. However, the distinction within ethno-cultural groups may occur and other elements, such as age, gender, employment, level of education, socioeconomic situation, family status, knowledge of English and individual background from an origin country, diversify the needs and experiences of the immigrants.

Depending on information needs in different stages, the immigrants consider various sources (deliberately or accidentally) for information seeking. Caidi et al. (2010) mentioned a set of commonly identified information sources in a form of four categories:

- 1) Social networks of strong (family, friends, coworkers etc.) and weak ties (settlement workers, government employees, volunteers etc.), ethnolinguistic gatekeepers (who have understanding on both the mother language of immigrants group and the official language of the host country)
- 2) The formal sources, such as settlement agencies, government and non-government community organizations, social welfares, ethno-cultural companies, libraries, local churches and local service providers



3) The information and communication technologies including computer and internet sources, such as local newspapers, chat rooms, social media groups, home country internet sites via mobile phones, television, radio satellite systems.

4) The ethnic media sources which display information about immigrants' home country events, issues, language and culture, such as the ethnic local newspapers in an origin language, traditional TV shows, cultural programs and other web-based media sources are considered meaningful sources for many new immigrants (Refer to Table 2.1).

**Table 2. 1 Information sources identified by settlement stages**

| Pre-migration   | Immediate  | Intermediate  | Long-term  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contact family and friends who have already emigrated to the destination country for advise and support</li> <li>• contact government for migration information</li> <li>• use the Internet to find information about new country</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contact family and friends who have already emigrated for assistance and support</li> <li>• contact settlement agencies and ethno-cultural orgs for immediate needs</li> <li>• gain familiarity with local and national media (TV, radio, print press, etc.)</li> <li>• use of Internet and other ICTs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• employment agencies</li> <li>• use the Internet to find jobs</li> <li>• develop local weak ties from strong ties</li> <li>• volunteer</li> <li>• contact professional associations</li> <li>• Visit library</li> <li>• join local groups and organizations</li> <li>• ongoing maintenance of transnational networks</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop local social networks</li> <li>• ongoing maintenance of transnational networks</li> <li>• join local groups and organizations</li> <li>• ongoing use of ethnic media</li> <li>• access leisure material</li> <li>• access citizenship information</li> <li>• access counselling and support services</li> </ul> |

Source: Caidi et al. (2010)

## 2.3 Justification on 'Gender' perspective

### 2.3.1 Gender Perspective and the Human Information Behavior

Gender plays a vital role in intervening information behavior of individuals (Wilson, 1999). There is only a little research on gender differences in information behavioral literature. Steinerová & Šušol (2007) has presented the gender gap in different communication, recreation patterns and information which has an impact on development of social and cultural contexts of an individual information

behavior. Their findings revealed that men prefer an individual information seeking and women apply a collaborative information use as a library user. Women have different orientation, collaboration, feelings and experiences in use of electronic resources and publishing than the male respondents. In addition, gender gap can be seen in various information and communication ways, such as, Lim and Kwon (2010) study showed that women are more inclined towards privacy, misuse of internet and larger information overload issues and appreciate the communicative features of the internet, while men are more likely to use online transactions, play games, use entertainment and attain the information. Further, women normally search for an information in the broader context, with wider vocabulary and use personal identification and imagination while learning the new information. Lim and Kwon (2010) supported that girls generally use their intuition and insight for seeking information on internet. Their behavior is conceptualized as a social event rather an individualistic approach of boys. Additionally, Chatman (1992) has shown her interest in studying about information behavior of retired women in the United States.

### **2.3.2 Gender Perspective and the Immigrants' Information Behavior**

Council (2005) declared that refugee women can have complex health needs concerning trauma and separation from their home countries and hence, need certain information to deal with physical and psychological impacts. Similarly, UN Women (2016) mentioned the importance of information in meeting womens' distinct vulnerabilities during the settlement process and during transit in reception centers. Further, lack of information about available services in settlement transit routes, language barrier and cultural factors are huge difficulties for many vulnerable refugee women (UN Women, 2016). Fisher, Durrance and Bouch Hinton (2004) have stressed that female refugees have unique information needs including health issues and women-related diseases and have more challenges of deprivation and exploitation than male counterparts. Nekesa and Odong (2017) findings reveal that female refugees face high cultural barriers when accessing the health care services and find it difficult to access other necessary information as well. Nekesa and Odong (2017) has further investigated

information-seeking behavior of women refugees in Uganda - by studying their health-related information needs, challenges in accessing information and role of public libraries in providing the information.

### **2.3.3 Gender Perspective and the Social Psychology**

As this thesis has an objective to examine the motivation of *female* newcomer refugees for participating in certain co-ethnic social networks, it is worth recognizing the literature about the social psychological perspective of *females*. Steinerová and Šušol (2007) stated that social psychology defines physical, mental and social differences of men and women in which the latter includes qualities of sensitivity to people, care, adaptability and emotional expressivity which impact the human information behavior. Women prefer the need for relations between people, while men are more concerned about their individual performances. The psychological distress, such as depression, anxiety and obsessive symptoms among immigrant women are higher than men (Ritsner et al, 2001). The main five sources of stress are family problems, inappropriate climatic situations, distress about future, poor health status and uncertainty in the present life condition are reported in (Ritsner et al, 2001) study. This shows that gender validity is an important mediating factor underlying the differential perception of risk factors in a host country. Chung, Bemak and Wong (2000) has studied gender differences in refugees' psychological adjustment and level of distress for social support for the Vietnamese refugees.

### **2.4 'small-world' and 'life-world' of information**

The social contexts of information behavior were slowly emerged during the early 1990s. Several aspects, such as sociocultural, social and sociolinguistic factors were considered as naturalistic approaches in information behavior studies (Burnett and Jaeger, 2008). The social approaches address information behavior phenomena with a broader sense that lies outside the realm of cognitive frameworks. Chatman's (1992) work has significant importance in introducing this shift, in focus from the ordinary cognitive factors to the social, cultural and emotional ones. She initially developed three frameworks for understanding the human information behavior in a social context: theory of information poverty,

theory of life in the round, and theory of normative behavior. Chatman's theory of information poverty (Chatman, 1996) took place from different ethnographic studies that she conducted during late 1980s and early 1990s. She managed to borrow some theories from the social sciences field to examine everyday information flow in different 'small world' surroundings (Burnett and Jaeger, 2008).

#### **2.4.1 The Information world**

Theory of information world draws upon the work from various disciplines and social theories. It provides a framework to examine social dimensions and uses of information concurrently at an immediate (small worlds) and a broader (the lifeworld) social level. Jurgen Habermas and Elfreda Chatman, the largest contributors to theoretical work of information worlds, presented two different but complementary conceptualizations of information behavior at different levels of a society (Dankasa, 2017). These concepts are designed to bridge gaps between the ways in which information is viewed in terms of small social units and in larger societal and political environment. Thus, information world describes that the information behavior is shaped respectively by both immediate influences, including friends, family, colleagues and trusted information sources of the small world of individuals, as well as the broad social influences, such as public sphere institutions, politics, technology and media of the lifeworld. The theory further suggests that small worlds exists within a large lifeworld context and influences lifeworld interactions in some situations (Dankasa, 2017).

#### **2.4.2 The Habermas theory of 'Life-world'**

Habermas' concept of information lifeworld can be defined as 'the whole ensemble of human relations which is coordinated and reproduced' through communication practices and information exchange (Burnett and Jaeger, 2011, p.170). The lifeworld approach reaches across a large swath of a culture expansively and contains social exchange of society members in a lifeworld collectively. Habermas (1992, p. 109) cited in Calhoun (1992) mentioned the lifeworld as a combination of a collective information and a social environment which works together to build the information resources, perspectives and voices of all society members. The

general and full range of communication resources, such as new media, news, services and channels, television and radio, entertainment, supermarket billboards, blogs, and much more available in the outlets of a cultural environment, are considered as lifeworld of information.

#### **2.4.3 The Chatman's theory of 'Small-world'**

On the other hand, according to the information theorist Chatman (1991, p. 447), people have a little contact with a community outside their immediate social milieu and are only concerned with information that is perceived as useful for everyday reality and responds to some practical issues. This constructs a small world for locals in which they seek and share information by generally recognized norms based on values shared by community members. Chatman supported the small world concept in a series of ethnographic studies – by investigating information seeking, use and communicating ways of poor people within small world. She popularized the *theory of small-world* in developing her theories in information behavior research and introduced the small world as a world of members sharing similar opinions and concerns and understand each other due to the similar customs and languages they uniquely share (Chatman, 1991, p. 438). The theory of small-world can be seen in diverse groups of special population such as the prisoners (Chatman, 1999, p.207), the poor (Chatman, 1985) and women of special groups (Chatman, 1986, 1992, p. 48) . Burnett, Besant and Chatman (2001) identified the poor people as a minority group of the larger social world. And the concept of small-world is used to understand the particular group's context in their everyday activities and their normative behavior in a local community by Savolainen (2009).

Theory of life in the round (Chatman, 1999) also supports the view of *small world* and explains that members share a common awareness of the important information resources and the ways to access them. Members of the small world tend to think alike, have knowledge of important and reliable sources in group and experience similar social reality. Theory of life in the round additionally highlights the role of social norms in relation to small world. It describes certain activities, norms and behaviors of the members of the small-world that are acceptable within

the group. Dankasa (2017) has highlighted information of small world of Catholic clergy in the Northern Nigeria and has applied Chatman's life in the round theory to examine their information seeking patterns in a particular religious circle. The refugees and migrants are the group of people with a particular way of life and expected behaviors which is different and unique from the other host society people. The members of this group are expected to follow some specific principles of social norms, cultures, religion and tradition. The studies - that investigate the influence of cultural, religion or traditional influences on how the information is sought and shared among the refugees or migrants and how they build small-world of information - are lacking. The theory of small-world is applied in this thesis to understand information behavior of new refugee members who are somehow living life in the round - according to Chatman's (1992, 1999) theory.

The concept of small world is neither negative nor positive by nature, rather a descriptive view on accepting the 'small' field of concerns and interests of a specific social setting (Thompson, 2009). An information poor (geographically and economically constrained to information resources) and an information rich (geographically and economically accessible to information resources), both type of people can exist in the context of a 'small world', in a sense that their day-to-day interests and activities are structured and limited by a recognizable set of social and cultural norm, religious boundaries and other influencing factors specified to the localized context of the world itself (Jaeger and Burnett, 2005).

#### **2.4.4 The concept of 'cosmopolitan' and 'locals'**

Merton (1972, p.16) relevantly supports the view of both Habermas theory of life-world and Chatman's theory of small-world. He presented two types of individuals and networks they chose for help and advice. The first type is 'cosmopolitan' people who have an orientation outside one's social world to the 'Great Society' (society of 'life-world' according to Habermas concept) with its focus on national and international interests. In this type, Merton refers to people who prefer the larger world as their social network for fulfilling their needs. Chatman (1999) has referred the Merton's (1972, p.16) concept of 'cosmopolitan' to the prisoners' social behavior of staying in touch with that other life of outsiders and preferring

interests and values of outsiders. On the other hand, the second type of people are categorized as 'locals' - the people of inside with focus on central life interests and has minimum interest towards a larger society (Merton 1972). These people develop and maintain the relationships with prisoners inside the prison and blame system responsible for building small world (Chatman, 1999).

#### **2.4.5 The concept of 'folk society'**

Redfield (1943) concept of 'folk society' helps in further understanding the view of Chatman's small-world. Redfield (1943) referred to the folk society as a small society or a little world, in which people define their community life based on classification of cultural, social and conceptual frames of way of life. In the phase of problems, the people of folk society consult the ways of dealing with problems in communal perspectives with a little need to consider the objectivity of the source of information and less need for critical view. In this regard, Becker (1950) and Odum (1953) cited in Chatman (1999) mentioned that the community of insider and outsiders is actually influenced by mental thinking and feeling of people of a folk society. The way of life of insiders (folk society people) is different than the outsiders' community and so they prefer inside information more useful, trustworthy and relevant rather outside and build a small-world around them.

#### **2.4.6 The concept of 'location'**

Another relevantly useful concept, is the view of small-world from the perspective of 'location'. Shils (1957) cited in Chatman (1999) explained the location as a key encouraging factor for people to gain information in certain small-world networks which are remotely and abstractly available in hand. The social locations of people determine that which everyday things require compelling concentration and which require no focus at all. It is easy for people to interact and seek information in immediate present circle around them rather considering sources at distant.

#### **2.4.7 The concept of 'Information Poverty'**

The Chatman's (1996) concept of information poverty shows the people as information poor when they perceive the shortage of information sources for their own world views and treat the outside information suspiciously. The information

poor people have set the sense of control over inside view of everyday lives and have privilege themselves accessing certain kinds of knowledge. Chatman mainly desired to identify other factors that contribute to information poverty rather than an economic poverty in her studies (Chatman 1996). She stressed the relevance of the inside/outside factor and explained that peoples' living experiences are shaped by shared common cultures, social, religious etc. perspectives, which force them to build inside world based on the commonalities. When the members of small-world (inside-world) seek or share information from members of life-world (outside-world), their information seeking behavior highly influenced by a few factors, including secrecy, deception, risk-taking and situational relevance. The 'secrecy' occurs when insider consider his/her piece of information suspicious and wishes to keep it secret from outsider. The 'deception' refers to one's behavior of not telling the true story to others and share information that is meaningless and false. The 'risk-taking' shows that an individual feels risk in sharing certain type of information, such as job information etc. which can leave the person in trouble (Chatman, 1996). The 'relevancy' shows that a person avoids seeking or sharing information in some situations when he/she assumes the irrelevance of the sources. In such situations, member prevents and avoids the information from outside and this may have a negative effect on kinds of information insiders attain and use - which subsequently leads to information poverty (Dankasa, 2017). Chatman sees a member of small-world as a contributing factor to information poverty. Many researchers have adopted Chatman's concept of information poverty to study the information needs of different marginalized groups, such as people living with AIDS (Veinot, 2009, 2010 cited in Lingel, 2013), queer youth (Hamer, 2003 cited in Lingel, 2013), and intimate partner violence survivors (Westbrook, 2008 cited in Lingel, 2013) and among others.

Although Chatman's conceptualization of information poverty explains the lived-experiences of poor as people of small-world, but I view small-world conceptualization from other type of population of social world rather those who are materially poor. In my thesis, I relate the concept of 'information poverty' as a risk factor resulting from refugees' information behavior of the 'small-world' - in which they only value co-ethnic type of social networks and ignore other



multinational social networks. The idea of relevance and information poverty better relate with my study. Chatman (1996) explains that individuals' views about usefulness of some information source is irrelevant for his/her concerns or interests. Cuadra and Katter (1967) also mentioned that the concept of irrelevance is related with peoples' personal preferences and choices. The information sources make no sense to some individuals who are engaged in some kind of problematic situation, in which they might consider outside information sources are irrelevant and useless.

## **2.5 The Social Networks**

The social networks play an important role in lives of immigrants and refugees to integrate in the host country. Many researchers have significantly considered the value of migrants' social networks for their initial settlement and employment in a new country (Castles and Miller, 2003 and Jordan and Duvell, 2003 cited in Ryan et al, 2008). Migration studies have defined the migrants' networks as interpersonal relations, friends, community members and family ties in their places of origin and destination. These networks help them in initial migration movement, such as housing, finance, medical and other types of living and emotional supports (Williams, 2006). The social networks are titled as a social capital of individuals in various literatures. Putman (2002) cited in Cheung and Phillimore (2013) has defined the 'social capital' and the 'social network' as a synonymous term. A social capital emphasizes the value of friendship and connections, more than the real money we have (Putman, 2007 cited in Kindler, Ratcheva & Piechowska, 2015) and indicates that physical and human capital cannot function properly without human interactions and connections. The social networks connect people through occupational, cultural, affection or familial basis and are categorized as 'strong ties' and 'weak ties' in many studies (Granovetter, 1973). There is no definite dividing line between a strong and weak connection, rather it is an individual's intuitive classification. The people connected through strong ties can be classified as friends, relatives, families, cousins etc. While, weak ties consist of acquaintances, colleagues, classmates etc. Each person can have

more than one strong or weak ties and these ties provide different types of information exchange among them (Glanville & Bienenstock, 2009,).

From the refugees' perspective, refugee reception camps are primary and important type of social ties. The refugees consider camp's social world as a strong connection and feel free to consult their personal and monetary matters in such networks (Pugliesi, 1998). There are other types of social networks available for refugees, such as government institutes, language schools, training institutes, private organizations, universities, public and private agencies, religious and cultural organizations and non-government organizations (NGOs) (Sönmez, 1989). Noteably, it might be difficult for new refugees to develop trust on some of the social networks, such as the host country's humanitarian commitments, sponsors and other government settlement service providers for information (Lamba & Krahn, 2003). In addition, some studies have specifically focused on *female* refugees' networks as a main source of information for them. Lamba and Krahn (2003) mentioned that many of female newcomers obtain strong support from immediate family members, friends and other female community members. They reported that women consider the social networks of other female members as strong ties and prefer to communicate and interact more in such platforms (Lamba and Krahn, 2003). The weak ties, such as relations outside one's immediate circle, are also important forms of support and information for newcomers. The ethnic group networks, which refer to people of the same culture and traditions, are also a part of strong ties.

From the gender perspective, female newcomers may face more challenges of social isolation than their male counterparts and are less likely to speak the language of the host country (Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women 2003, cited in Hynie et al, 2011). Hynie et al (2011) mentioned that women are found with a fewer resources to invest and exchange the opportunities to a form new social relationship and have less power to build social capital through their networks. Further, women tend to suffer more negative mental health problems due to an inadequate social network and lack of social inclusion (Hynie et al, 2011). The female refugees have more reliance on familial networks. They generally discuss monetary problems with their family members only and

prefer the home-centered leisure networks and friendships in host country (Lamba and Krahn, 2003).

Gelle (2015) argued that a successful integration occurs when the host society develops and maintains an inter-ethnic social relation with immigrants and refugees. The new immigrants typically enjoy less social capital than those who arrived before them. Gelle (2015) introduced the concept of 'bridging' and 'bonding' social capital, to better understand differences between two types of social networks that immigrants may establish in a host country. A bonding social capital is a social network within one certain group, while a bridging network refers to a social capital created by social connections between a diverse group of people (Gelle, 2015). Bonding social networks can be labeled as 'co-ethnic networks', having homogeneous people with same cultures, traditions and same world. While bridging social networks can be categorized as 'multinational' networks, having people of different cultures and backgrounds.

Ryan et al. (2008) has explored various types of co-ethnic, culturally-bonded, strong ties, weak ties and temporary networks, that Polish migrants experience during their settlement in London. Co-ethnic networks are build of many trusted relations in which refugees trust the members for information about practical support, employment, emotional support, and financial help (Ryan et al. 2008). These networks may be linked by language, nationality, culture, physical location, religion and traditions. Adversly, the tight networks of co-ethnics can also lead to a situation of cheating, deception and disadvatnage of social integration (Putman, 2007. p. 137). The question of 'trust' in any social network, is not an easy debate. The members of co-ethnic networks may also lack trust among the same cultural groups communities. Additionally, new refugees maintain telephonic and mail contacts with immediate family members in origin country.

Women are described as seeking and sharing more information regarding emotional support with their distant families and are able to maintain transnational networks (Hynie et al 2011). Multiple studies, including (Simich, Beiser & Mawani, 2003; Barnes & Aguilar, 2007), have collectively mentioned that most of women refugees admire friends from co-ethnic community of the similar

challenges and experiences. Lack of English skills, passion for cultural maintenances and same gender are some obvious motivating factors that encourage females select certain co-ethnic social networks. Hence, cultural similarities and shared experiences are found more effective and reliable co-ethnic networks for newcomer female refugees, which consequently help their ability to build sufficient social capital in a new country (Barnes & Aguilar, 2007).

There are not many studies that emphasize on varieties of networks that refugees may have and different forms of informational support they may provide. Furthermore, insufficient attention has been paid on how the newcomers access existing networks or establish the new connections in a host country. Thus, this thesis attempts to find some forms of social networks that female new refugees establish during the integration process in Finland and the motivating factors to do so.

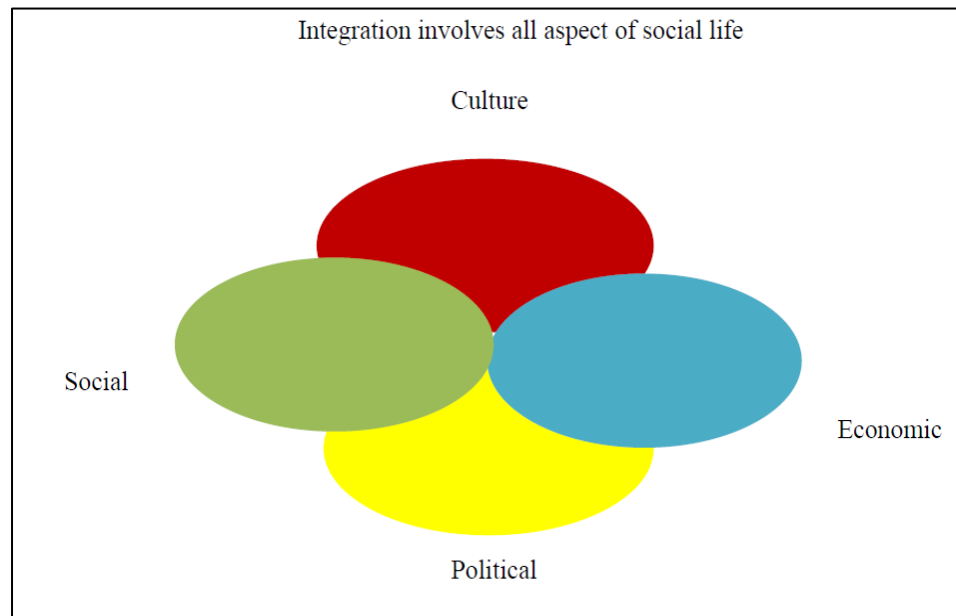
## **2.6 The Integration**

Defining the meaning of an 'integration' and its types are relevantly important for this study. An integration is defined as the participation of newcomers in different sectors of social life in a host country. It is considered as a middle road between assimilation and insertion (HCI, 1991 cited in Jacob 1994). According to the United Nation's definition:

“... the process and the result of the process, the results of the adaptation of persons of foreign origin into their new home society and acceptance by that society of the foreigner” (UNHCR, 2012 cited in Kafi Anaraki, 2017).

Wilkinson (2013) cited in (Kafi Anaraki, 2017) further defined the integration as a mutual process of newcomers and a new society's merger in a positive way. The integration involves all aspects of social life of newcomers in a host country, including social, culture, economic and political elements (Refer to Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2. 1 A Guide for developing the Immigrant Settlement Services**



The two main aspects of an integration that are useful for explaining in literature, are social and cultural integration. The concept of *social integration* is directly linked with individuals' social networks and relationship ties, while the *cultural integration* emphasizes individual's assimilation and adoption of both origin and host cultures.

### **2.6.1 The Social Integration**

Geust and Stamm (1993) cited in Obeng (2012) has highlighted the value of social integration as an existence of strong social networks which produce a strong stability in the society. 'Social integration' is different from the 'system integration', in which the institutions, organizations, government and mechanisms help newcomers in their practical settlement in a new place. The social integration refers to inclusion of people in system by creating relationships (formal and informal), among individuals and their attitude towards the host society (Jacob, 1994). The integration in social context is measured by the amount of time a person is engaged in establishing social activities in a network in which he/she is a member (Obeng, 2012).

## **2.6.2 The Cultural Integration**

Jacob (1994) has analyzed cultural adoption and social integration of Salvadoran refugees of a rural origin in Canada. He mentioned that the cultural integration demands more systematic and customized individual need-based services and improvements for people. Slonim-Nevo and Regev (2015) mentioned cultural integration as a mean of embracing different religions, sexual orientations, cultural affiliations, beliefs and confirming equal rights for all people of a society, including immigrants and locals. The individuals, who have a strong connection with their own culture, are less integrated in the receiving society (Mumford, 1998). The process of cultural adoption is necessary to be applied for an effective cultural integration. The John Berry's theory of cultural acculturation further supports the literature in this field.

### ***2.6.2.1 The Berry's Acculturation Model***

The John Berry's work about cultural adoption in the field of acculturation psychology is recognized in different literatures (Mumford, 1998) and his 'Theory of Acculturation' is considered the most relevant theory for this thesis. According to Berry (2005, p.3), acculturation is a process of cultural and psychological changes and interaction between two or more cultural groups and their members. The acculturation takes place when diverse cultures get into contact with one another, for similar food preferences, social networks, acquiring languages and adjusting forms of dressings (Berry, 1992, p.69). The Berry's perspective of acculturation strategies provides guideline for understanding the migrants' cultural adoption preferences when they move to a new country. Berry (1997) has identified four acculturation orientations: separation (maintaining the origin culture), assimilation (adopting the hosting society), marginalization (rejecting both nationalities) and integration (mixing with both nationalities). Furthermore, the amount of contact, that an individual spends with the host country and with his/her own cultural people, has an effect on his/her integration in a society. Hence, Berry's (1992) theory of acculturation has introduced two concepts: cultural maintenance and contact-participation. The former concept shows an extent by which an individual considers the importance of cultural identities and

elements and is responsible for their preservation. While, the latter concept refers to the extent that an individual becomes involved and participates in other cultural groups or remain primarily among the same-ethnic people (Berry, 1997 p.9). It also shows if a relationship and network with the new host society is appreciated by an individual or not (Refer to Figure 2.2).

**Figure 2. 2 The Berry's Model of Acculturation**

|  |            | <i>Culture maintenance</i>    |                        |
|--|------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
|  |            | <i>Yes</i>                    | <i>No</i>              |
| <i>Contact</i><br><i>Participation</i> | <i>Yes</i> | <i>Integration</i>            | <i>Assimilation</i>    |
|  | <i>No</i>  | <i>Separation/Segregation</i> | <i>Marginalization</i> |

Source: Berry (1997) cited in Kafi Anaraki (2017)

The above mentioned model represents four acculturation orientations (separation, assimilation, marginalization and integration), in relation with peoples' preferences in contacting participation (host society cultures) and their affection for own cultural maintenances. Kafi Anaraki's (2017) study about Afghan refugees' integration and cultural adoption in Sweden, has significantly revealed that refugees agreed to preserve their own culture and the host system. The candidates strongly showed their interest in learning about Swedish culture, tradition and values. This behavior can be categorized as *Integration* according to Berry's (1997) theory and is considered as ideal situation for the host and newcomer members both. The 'assimilation' occurs when newcomers refuse to follow their own culture and at the same time reject the host country's

participation and interactions. The 'separation' shows a scenario when newcomers deeply interact with their own cultural people and avoid the host cultural adoption. Lastly, the 'marginalization' applies when candidates lose interest in their own culture and wish to adopt the host country's culture happily. The 'assimilation' and 'separation' situations are not an ideal for the successful integration of new refugees in a country.

The Berry's (1997) theory of acculturation has been studied in a context of refugees and asylum seekers in which they are influenced by cultural shocks and acculturation stress (Slonim-Nevo and Regev, 2015, Baimoldina et al. 2013, Kafi Anaraki, 2017). Valtonen's (1994) study has presented the view of acculturation model in integration and adoption patterns of Vietnamese group of refugees in Turku, Finland. The high intra-group interactions and the re-building preferences for traditional support network indicate the maintenance of own culture and social identity (Valtonen, 1994). However, there is a less evidence from the previous studies that reflect the link between Berry's acculturation theory and information behavior of refugees. This thesis aims at understanding the behavior of cultural adoption of new female refugees in Finland (according to Berry's theory) and how types of acculturation impact their decision in selecting certain social networks for seeking and sharing specific information needs.

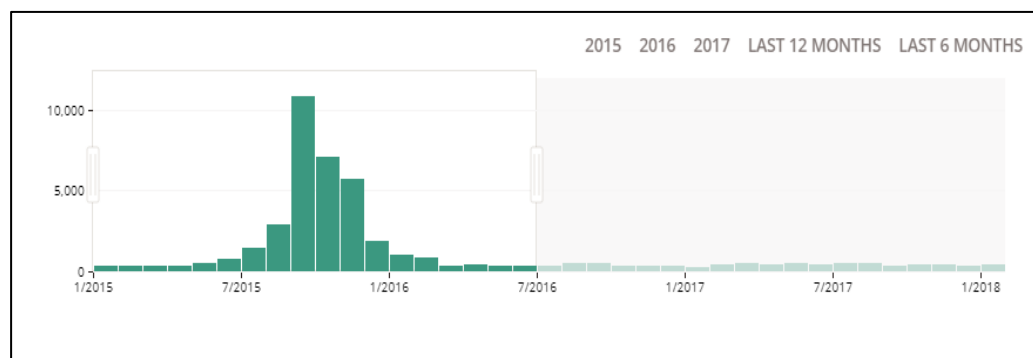
### **2.6.3 The Refugees' Integration in Finland**

Finland has recently received 1,500 - 1,600 asylum seekers each year, aside from 2015, in which a record number of asylum seekers (32,476) was unexpectedly high (Ministry of the Interior Finland, 2016). An *asylum seeker* is a person who seeks asylum and rights to live in a foreign country. And a *refugee* is someone who has been granted the asylum in one state or another (Finnish Immigration Services, 2017a). According to the Finnish Immigration System, an asylum seeker becomes refugee if a person is granted a successful asylum permission to reside in Finland (Finnish Immigration Services, 2017a). The International protection refers to the refugee status in Finland, which means that the Finnish international Agreement provides safe grounds to all refugees to live in the country. The number of refugees' applications have incredibly increased during 2015 and 2016 (Refer to



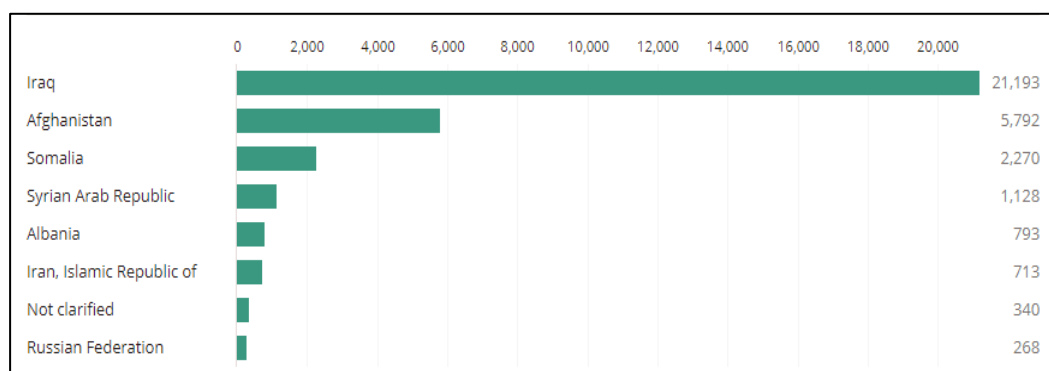
Figure 2.3). Most of the applications have lodged from the countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria (Finnish Immigration Services, 2017b; BBC, 2015) (Refer to Figure 2.4).

**Figure 2. 3 International Protection Applications Data**



Source: Finnish Immigration Services (2017b)

**Figure 2. 4 The citizenship statistics for refugee's application in 2015/2016**



Source: Finnish Immigration Services (2017b)

The increased pressure of refugees' seeking protection in Finland has enforced the Finnish government to take necessary steps for successful integration of newcomers. The Finnish Integration Act came into existence in May 1st, 1999 to promote the integration, equality and freedom of choice to achieve skills and information needed in the Finnish society (Oivo & Bruun, 2016). One of the main focuses of latest Finnish Government Integration Programme for 2016 – 2019, is to strengthen cross-culture exchange among Finns and migrants and to reduce

language gap (Oivo & Bruun, 2016). The Finnish Integration Policy has received credit in an international comparison and has received a score of fourth in the Migration Integration Policy Index 2015, after Sweden, Portugal and New Zealand (Saukkonen, 2016). Undoubtedly, the policy shines on a paper but, seems a flawless process to implement the integration strategies in practice. However, a process is not completely successful from many policy makers' and refugees' views. Such as, Saukkonen (2016) has mentioned a few shortcomings of integration process, such as a complication in the system, diverse approaches from the number of municipalities, the lack of transparency, the insufficient resources, the problems with education and labor force and the deficit in monitoring. Additionally, some anti-immigration Finnish parties have voiced out the risk of 'integration problems' that the country might have to face in near future (BBC, 2015). BBC (2015) highlighted that although, the 'multiculturalism' is main focus of the Finnish integration Plan, there is still a high fear of 'Muslims' minority culture to influence the host society's rules. This thesis has no intention to criticize the Finnish Integration process for refugees, rather have an aim to understand the importance of an integration from refugees' personal views.

Regarding the integration of refugees in Finland, there is a big literature gap of sufficient studies in the field. Some researchers have attempted to study the refugees' integration and resettlement strategies in Finland, but they lack in explaining an impact of possible influencing factors (e.g. culture) on a successful integration process. Valtonen (1998) has explored integration process of refugees of Middle East countries who resettled in Turku, Finland - for the family reunion or the employment purposes. Due to cultural distance, a social interaction with the Finnish people was valued as a challenging task for most of refugees in the study (Valtonen, 1998). The lack of established ethno-cultural communities and demographic imbalance offered pressure to refugees to assimilate with the Finnish society. The retention of their own culture was one of major integration goals of newcomers. Additionally, the strong bondedness with their own traditions and an unwillingness to look into the surrounding society for changing their ways, were major issues of refugees in Valtonen's (1998) study.

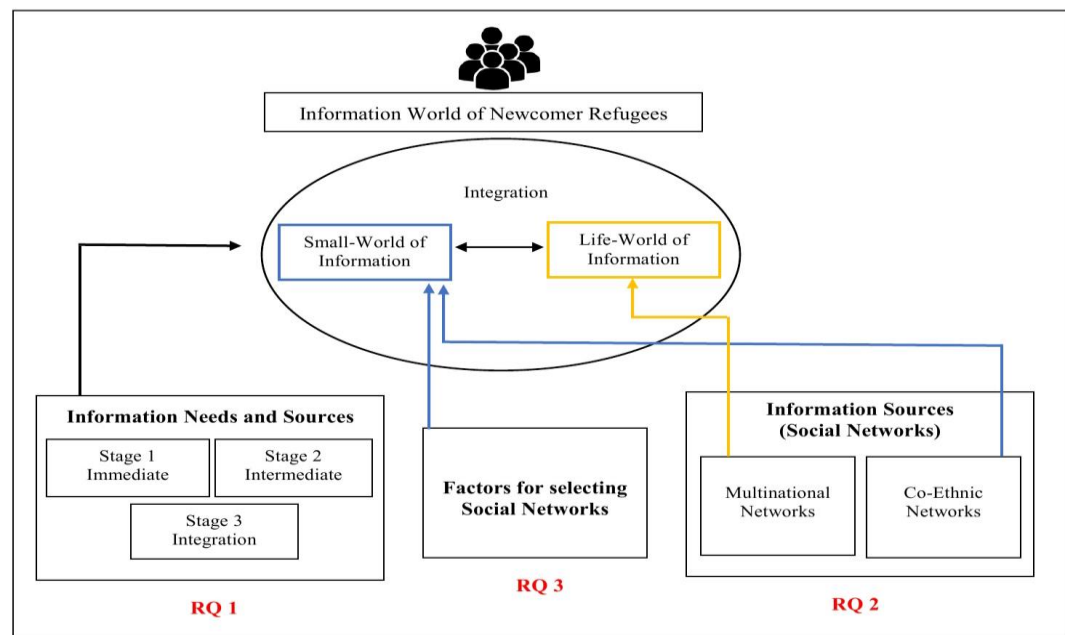
Obeng (2012) has mentioned a role of the Hakunila International Organization in immigrants' integration process in the region of Vantaa, Finland. The focus of government has significantly seen on immigrants' integration in a systematic aspect, by making various official policies and actions. In addition, the NGOs, private organizations, local volunteers and the humanitarian institutes focus on social and cultural involvement of newcomers in the Finnish mainstream society (Obeng, 2012).

Heikkilä and Peltonen's (2002) study has emphasized the value of multiculturalism for immigrants in their workplaces in Finland. The study has highlighted the role of NGOs and 'god-families' in helping the newcomers to integrate in the new municipalities and to build new social networks. Apparently, from the literature, the Finnish culture is typically seen as a reserved and bonded culture with its own traditions and rules. However, the private organizations and volunteers provide a sufficient support to all newcomers for a proper integration in the Finnish society.

## **2.7 Conceptual Framework**

Based on the theoretical support from literature, I have designed a conceptual framework of study (Refer to Figure 2.5). The information world of a new refugee consists of two different aspects: 'small-world' of information and 'life-world' of information. The small-world of information (followed by the Chatman's 1991 theory) is build when newcomers' information needs force them to consult some kind ofco-ethnic social networks to seek and share information. While, the life-world of information (followed by the Hebarmas's 1992 theory) is created when new refugees participate in many other social networks besides their own ethnicity and culture. It is an open world of information with wide range of information resources. Additionally, there are some motivating factors for refugees to select certain types of networks and consequently build small-world of information. Berry's (1997) theory of acculturation is used to find an impact of 'culture' on forming the small-world. The conceptual framework and its relation to theoretical support, will be explained in detail in Chapter 5.

**Figure 2. 5 The conceptual framework of the study**



## 2.8 Chapter conclusion

Information behavior is an interesting research field when studying with a perspective of minorities in the society, such as refugees. Studying information practices, including information needs and sources of female population, is an exciting aspect of latest research. Generally, women have dynamic and different types of information behavior than the men counterparts. Chatman's (1991) and Habermas's (1992) theories significantly describe the views of an immediate (small-world) and a broader (life-world) social level of individuals. These information worlds help in understanding the types of social networks that refugees might have during the integration process in Finland. The social networks, such as strong ties and weak ties, are means of social capital of a country. There are several social networks that refugees may utilize during their integration process, including government and private organizations, volunteers, learning school, families and friends etc. The literature also mentioned that female members have unique preferences of selecting certain social networks of close family members or other female associates in the host country. These social networks consequently help in successful integration from social and cultural

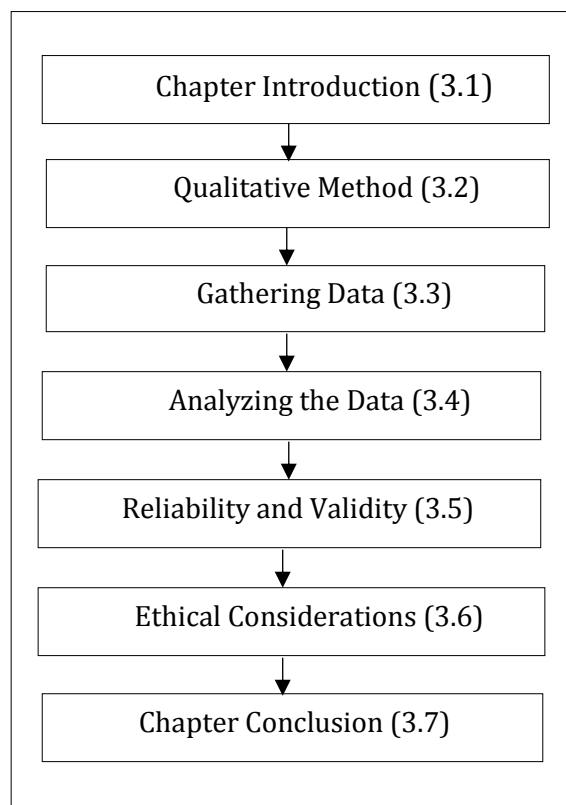
context. Berry's (1997) model of acculturation supports an explanation of cultural integration by describing the concept of separation, marginalization, assimilation and integration. Regarding the refugees' integration in Finland, there is not enough literature support from the text. However, some researches (Valtonen, 1998; Heikkilä and Peltonen 2002; Obeng, 2012) have revealed the importance of multiculturalism and social integration for all newcomers in Finland.

## 3. Chapter 3: Research Methodology

### 3.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter explains the qualitative research method techniques and data analysis technique used in this study. It also explains the aspects on reliability and validity and ethical considerations of the study (Refer to Figure 3.1).

**Figure 3 Outline of the Chapter 3**



### **3.2 Qualitative Method**

A quantitative research method is useful for quantifying the certain problem data and generalizing the results from a sample to an entire population of interest by measuring the incidence of multiple opinions in a given sample. This method demands highly structured techniques such as structured questionnaires, planned surveys, pre-disciplined interviews etc. While, a qualitative research method is exploratory in nature, one cannot automatically establish generalizations about outcomes. Instead, it is suitable for gaining in-depth understanding of underlying problems and motivations. This method offers a flexibility of designing semi-structured types of questionnaires and interviews. Generally, qualitative researchers have an interest in examining human behaviors and the social world to understand why certain things are the way they are in our society (Patton, 2005. p. 114). The critique of qualitative method is an issue of validity and reliability, which is difficult to accomplish. The issue of subjectivity is also a question in this method as the participants present their own ideas, values and views and are not necessarily representing the whole population's views. However, this issue can be managed by building a clear plan for the research process, choices of theory and the steps for future researchers (Patton, 2005. p. 114).

This thesis applies the qualitative research method with the intention to study the views of a particular group of newcomer female refugees in the city of Turku, Southwest Finland. It is not intended to generalize the study outcomes on the rest of the new refugees in Finland and other groups but attempts to gather reliable data from the view of interested informants.

### **3.3 Gathering Data**

There are several research techniques such as interviews, group discussions, ethnographic technique etc. that a researcher might use in a qualitative study. Initially, the ethnographic research method inspired me for conducting this thesis research. In this method, researchers generally observe or interact with the study participants and obtain a deep insight into the social domain. Chatman (1992) has adopted the ethnographic approach to intensely study the information world of a certain group of retired women in Garden Towers. She mentioned that

“ethnographic studies make known contextual meanings, cultural norms and social interactions that are not possible with other methods” (Chatman, 1992. p3). Even though this method provides most comprehensive view of the participant’s everyday perspectives, their preferences for participating in specific social communities and ordinary uses of information, there are some limitations in conducting ethnographic approach. For instance, this thesis study has *not* chosen the ethnographic approach for a few reasons. Firstly, it takes a lot of time to interact and live with the study subjects and demands sufficient skill and experience. This was not possible for me (as a researcher) in this particular study. Secondly, the primary objective of this study is *not* to examine the ‘everyday life’ information behavior of the newcomers, since I assume that new refugees indeed have no everyday experiences but have a special situation of being minorities in the host country. Therefore, the ‘focus group’ discussion and the ‘interviews’ research methods are considered most appropriate for this thesis research.

The open-ended type of questions is designed to be discussed both in focus group and in the personal interview session. The questions used in the interviews and the focus group are based on the conceptual framework of the study and are developed with the help of an interview guide of the most relevant literature.

### **3.3.1 Step one: Approaching the subject**

I have selected the city of ‘Turku’ in order to conduct the research on newcomer refugees - as the city has many foreigners, immigrants and refugees from various countries living in it. Approaching the desired subjects (participants) was a big challenge in the early stage. However, the Refugees Reception Center organized by ‘Red Cross Turku’ played an important role in providing background information about the new refugees’ journey in Finland from arrival to successful integration. The Red Cross management personnel also helped in introducing me to some volunteer new refugees who have been in Finland for less than five years. Undoubtedly, the Red Cross has a wide network with multiple volunteer organizations, churches, reception centers, public libraries, local service providers, individual volunteers and international clubs in Turku and other cities in Finland. Luckily, this led me to access some of the participants in a cultural event at the



Turku International Club in October 2017. It was easy to approach and talk to the female refugees as compared to the males at the event. Additionally, I came to know that the Turku Women Club deals with a group of refugee women of different age whom they assist in learning the language, trainings, jobs and other settlement works. I realized that females tend to have separate communities and happenings in most of the events and clubs in Turku - therefore, approaching and studying particularly *females* can be a valuable and defined subject for this thesis.

Finally, personal interaction with each single participant took place in different places such as the Turku International Club, Turku Women Club, Language cafe in Turku City Library and the Red Cross local office in Turku. I, as a researcher, personally arranged time and availability to attend these events during October 2017. The randomly selected volunteer new refugee females were considered as the final candidates for the interviews.

### ***3.3.1.1 The Interviewees***

All the interviewees belong to the same gender group (female), are of the age between 22 and 30 and represent three different nationalities (Somalia, Syria and Iraq). All the candidates have successfully received the Resident Permit from Finnish Immigration Services and are at the 'integration' stage of settlement. Most of the participants are studying in different fields in training institutes, learning the Finnish language in public schools and working part and full time in different sectors in Turku. The candidates communicate in different mother tongues, including Arabic, Somali, Turkish, Dari and Kurdish and have little knowledge of speaking and understanding English. It is assumed that the life situations, experiences, and therefore perceptions are similar for all the participants who were interviewed.

**Table 3. 1 The overview of Interviewees' Details**

| Participants  | Gender | Age | Status   | Country | Mother Language          |
|---------------|--------|-----|--|---------|--------------------------|
| Participant 1 | Female | 23  | Stay in Finland: 2.5 years<br>Currently: Student at Training School                  | Somalia | Somali                   |
| Participant 2 | Female | 24  | Stay in Finland: 2.1 years<br>Currently: Student & Part time work                    | Syria   | Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish |
| Participant 3 | Female | 24  | Stay in Finland: 3.2 years<br>Currently: Student at Language School                  | Syria   | Arabic, Kurdish          |
| Participant 4 | Female | 26  | Stay in Finland: 3 years<br>Currently: Student at Training School and Part time work | Iraq    | Arabic, Turkish          |
| Participant 5 | Female | 28  | Stay in Finland: 3.5 years<br>Currently: Full-time work                              | Somalia | Somali, Arabic           |
| Participant 6 | Female | 22  | Stay in Finland: 2.8 years<br>Currently: Student at Training and Language School     | Somalia | Somali                   |
| Participant 7 | Female | 30  | Stay in Finland: 3.1 years<br>Currently: Full time work                              | Iraq    | Arabic, Kurdish, Dari    |
| Participant 8 | Female | 28  | Stay in Finland: 2 years<br>Currently: Full-time work                                | Somalia | Somali                   |

### 3.3.2 Step two: Focus group discussion

As a next step, all the interviewees were invited together to a focus group discussion session by mid-November 2017. A focus group provides insights into how participants think and assists the researcher in gaining a thorough understanding of the phenomena being studied. A focus group generally utilizes the sample of individuals with characteristics of the overall population and can contribute to the researcher gaining a greater understanding of the topic (Patton, 2005. p. 114). A focus group method is sometimes referred to as a focus group interview or a group depth interview. Researchers suggest the focus group interviews should involve a group of seven to eight people who come from similar

social and cultural backgrounds and have similar experiences or concerns (Kitzinger, 1995. P.299). This method helps the researcher in capturing shared lived experiences and uncovering the aspects of understanding that often remain hidden in the formal conventional in-depth interviewing technique (Patton, 2005. p. 114). The great advantage of this method is its ability to cultivate interviewees' responses to the event as they evolve (Kitzinger, 1995. P.299).

Clip: A random clipart showing the idea of 'focus group' discussion with participants



The participants of this research work are all considered to share the same background, they have left their home countries and are struggling to integrate in Finland. They share the same ethnicity, culture, religion and traditions - with minor differences in traditions only. All participants were invited together to lunch at my place for the initial introductory meeting and observation. Homemade lunch in a privately decorated kitchen was purposely chosen to build a homely communicable environment for the participants. Importantly, their special religious priorities concerning 'Halal food' was highly considered. All of the participants belong to the same religion, i.e. Islam. Having the advantage of sharing the same religion, gender and mutual cultural background, I was easily able to discuss research interests more fully. The informants were encouraged to tell and share their stories in an informal way - about life as a refugee, about how they find

Finland and particularly Turku as a place of living, about Finnish people and their journey in Finland. Ethically, the participants were not being forced at any step to share their memories or experiences related to their past (good or bad) events or experiences in their home-country or related to ex-family members who are not accompanying them at present. The focus of the discussion was not exploring their past experiences, but the present life events and stories related to the integration and settlement in the Finnish society. Although language was a big challenge for me, the cultural and religious similarities enabled me to conduct the discussion session for almost 45 - 50 minutes smoothly. The relationships further developed in this meeting, which allowed me to invite them for one-to-one in-depth personal interviews later. Luckily, all of the informants agreed to participate in personal interviews.

The drawback of this research method is that- it is not suitable for all types of research studies, such as research dealing with personal matters involving financial status, personal health issues HIV/AIDS, sexuality, divorce, domestic violence etc. (Gelle, 2015). Secondly, not all of the participants actively participate in the discussion which may impact the researcher's ability to analyze the results of discussion. However, I felt that the personality of some individual participants was influencing the group discussion somehow and a few of the candidates were not quite comfortable sharing their experiences and problems in front of others. Therefore, I decided to conduct semi-structured face-to-face interview as the next step of the research process.

### **3.3.3 Step three: Interviews**

The semi-structured, in depth-interviews were designed after two weeks of conducting the focus group discussion, i.e. by early December 2017. The interview guide employs a combination of Caidi and Allard (2005), Melnyk (2017) and Kafi Anaraki (2017) studies and conceptual ideas. These researchers have strongly stressed the importance of semi-structured open-ended questions as a tool of two-way communication with the element of flexibility for both researcher and respondent to obtain fairly open answers. Melnyk (2017) adopted the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews to investigate the information practices of

the Afghan refugees during the integration period - in Kronoberg County in Southern Sweden. He found the interviews to be an effective tool to receive information from newcomers and representatives of different governmental and private organizations. Similarly, Khoir (2016) has preferred to conduct semi-structured open-ended interviews with Asian immigrants in urban South Australia to study their everyday information-seeking behavior and the value of public library services. Additionally, Gelle's (2015) study about Somalis' education and integration in Finland has also followed the principles of semi-structured interviews which allowed informants to discuss the research questions freely within the set of conceptual framework.

The interviews were conducted at different places, including the Red Cross Turku office in the city center, Turku City Library, my (author's) home and at public cafes. The interviews lasted approximately one hour, and they were not recorded due to the discomfort of the informants. Only two interviews were permitted to be recorded by the informants. The interviews are transcribed in English and interviewees are labelled as participant 1, participant 2 to participant 8 in this study (Refer Table 3.1). All participants had basic knowledge of communication in English except two of the respondents from Syria who were able to understand their native language only. Additionally, they were also able to communicate in basic level Finnish which they are actively learning at local schools in Turku. Since I, being a researcher, lack the sufficient language skills in speaking and understanding Finnish, other informants (who had a good command of both Finnish and English) helped me understand the views of these two Syrian candidates (participant 2 and participant 3) by translating (from Finnish into English) in focus group discussion. Concerning the personal interviews, I had to consult and hire a volunteer community activist person from Turku Women Club management who willingly assisted me with her translation skills during the interviews with these two participants.

### **3.4 Analyzing the data: Thematic analysis approach**

The thematic analysis approach is used to interpret the data collected during discussion and interviews in this study. Thematic analysis is a widely used

qualitative approach to analyze the interviews and is mainly build upon the theoretical concepts. Ritchie and Spencer (2002) cited in Melynk (2017) mentioned this approach as a way of identifying, analyzing and reporting the different patterns within data and it provides a qualitative, detailed and nuanced amount of data. The method is considered flexible and complex at the same time, for a researcher to spend a lot of time in searching for similar themes and avoiding irrelevant data (Patton, 2005. p. 107). The researcher is free to choose and label the themes and keywords for coding according to his/her own understanding as long as the results are compatible with the overall study objective. (Melynk, 2017).

I decided to choose this approach so that it can complement the research questions by facilitating an investigation from two perspectives: first, from the discussion of focus group and second, the interviews manuscripts. The primary focus is to create the consistency of the coding and themes with the research questions in this approach. The digital and printed communication material was also analyzed in addition to the focus group discussion and interview data.

Following the Melnyk's (2017) steps tracked by the earlier work of Ritchie and Spencer (2002) cited in Melynk (2017), the thematic analysis was conducted in the following five stages in this thesis. Creswell (2007) and Miles & Huberman (1984) cited in Melynk (2017) have also supported these stages of analysis.

### **3.4.1 Stage one**

In the first stage, the two audio-recorded interviews were listened to twice and transcribed on paper and the other six interview scripts were re-transcribed in a proper form. It was the most time-consuming and critical stage of reading the script several times and making sure to avoid the irrelevant data. It is quite normal to experience plenty of irrelevant information in qualitative semi-structured interviews. The preliminary patterns are formed by analyzing the possible similarities and differences among participants' views about their information behavior.

### **3.4.2 Stage two**

In the second stage, the coding process took place by organizing the data into significant groups. I preferred to use multi-color highlighter and cards for the purpose of coding the data on papers. The codes were roughly assigned to the relevant and similar areas in this stage. The data from discussion and personal in-depth interviews equally supported the analysis.

### **3.4.3 Stage three and four**

In the third stage, it is recommended to build the themes for the pre-assigned common codes and to organize and group them in stage four (Melynk, 2017). I managed to draw different themes for all similar codes and noted the sub themes separately. The codes and themes are divided into different categories in this stage, which helped in building the relationships among these themes in next stage. The next, fourth stage, was quite interesting, as it required me to use the mapping technique to template the findings of discussion and interviews and make possible comparisons and connections (Refer to Appendix 1). The coding is done in an explicit and simple way, but the themes are drawn with the help of implicit keywords - as per my comfortability in understanding. Please note that all themes are directly related to the most basic part of the information and can be evaluated in a sensemaking way with respect to the study phenomenon. I decided to draw three main categories (themes) in the order of the three research questions of this study. Each category has been labeled with the suitable title and connected with one another in the most relevant manner (Refer to Appendix 1).

### **3.4.4 Stage five**

In the last, fifth stage, a figure was drawn to summarize the results with the help of themes and codes. The figure, in fact, was aligned with the elements in the conceptual framework of the study. It helped me in defining the two several types of groups of respondents (One, those who prefer co-ethnic social networks are the people of small-world of information and second, those who are willing to establish multinational social connections are the people of open-world of information according to the Chatman's and Habermas theories).

### 3.5 Reliability, Validity and Limitations

Reliability refers to the degree to which the researcher's observation is reported as consistent with some phenomenon during the period of the inquiry (Becker, Byrman & Ferguson, 2012. p. 219). The two types of reliabilities exist in a qualitative study i.e. the external and internal reliability. The former concerns the degree of replicability of the study and the latter deals with whether more than one observer or research member agree about the results or findings (Becker et al, 2012. p. 219). Concerning the validity, it refers to whether a researcher is able to observe, identify and generalize the phenomena unbiasedly. The internal validity shows the good connection between the research observations and the theoretical concepts developed by me. The external validity defines the degree to which the research findings can be generalized across the social settings (Becker et al, 2012. p. 219).

In this study, the qualitative thematic analysis deals with the internal validity of the research. In this regard, the coding frame and thematic map have been submitted to my ex-colleague (researcher in a university in Pakistan) for review of the consistency. This process took place during Christmas holidays (end of December) and the colleague agreed with most of the coding and thematic framework besides noticing a few additional areas which are - somehow - not relevantly/directly related with these research objectives.

To achieve perfect reliability in a qualitative study is a big challenge but I have tried the best to produce a reliable piece of work by a few tasks such as - the *consistently taking notes* of the main points of the interviewees' script right after the interview and established some personal *friendship connections* with the participants to make them share their integration experiences in detail. To analyze and interpret the results in most unbiased way is another challenge for a reliable and valid study. Even though I tend to share most of the common cultural beliefs and practices in terms of people, living style, food and festivals with the study participants and the situation of being away from home country, I have predefined my role as an external *researcher* during the whole process of the study.



Additionally, there are few factors accounted as limitations to the external validity and reliability of this study. Such as, the geographic limitation (the Turku City) and the focus on one group of newcomer refugees in terms of gender (females only) and nationalities (Somalia, Syria and Iraq) are considered as limitations. The study has focused on the participants who are in the process of integration and reside in Finland for less than five years, which is a limitation of timeline. Furthermore, the first method of focus group had a limitation that not all participants could recall and share their experiences openly during the discussion. Therefore, the second method of in-depth personal interview was held to assure the collection of suitable and reliable data. Moreover, due to the limitation of sufficient language skills (Finnish), the interviews were conducted in English. The volunteer translator assisted me with his translation skills, especially for the two participants who were extremely poor communicating English. Still, it has somehow limited the richness of the accounts, especially during the focus group discussion. Additionally, being a newcomer (foreign student) to Finland myself, made me learn about Finnish system of integration for new refugees on different levels in Finland. Noteably, Finland has not a very long history and experience of welcoming and dealing with refugees from the Arab war-zones regions as other Scandinavian neighbors such as Sweden, Norway and Denmark. According to the Finnish Immigration Service (2016), the largest asylum seekers' group from Iraq, Somalia and Syria along with other countries from 97 different nationalities has approached the country in 2014 onward (BBC, 2015). This has imposed a limitation on availability of sufficient relevant previous studies and researches in the context of Finland. On one hand, it was difficult for me to collect the most relevant background information, except few concerned studies conducted in the refugees' information matters from Finnish perspective (Baghbani et al, 2016 cited in Eskola et al, 2017; Gelle, 2015). On the other hand, this factor might be seen as a positive point that I managed to present a fresh view of the integration problems of newcomers. This can possibly help the Finnish integration system to follow some improved arrangements for newcomers in future.

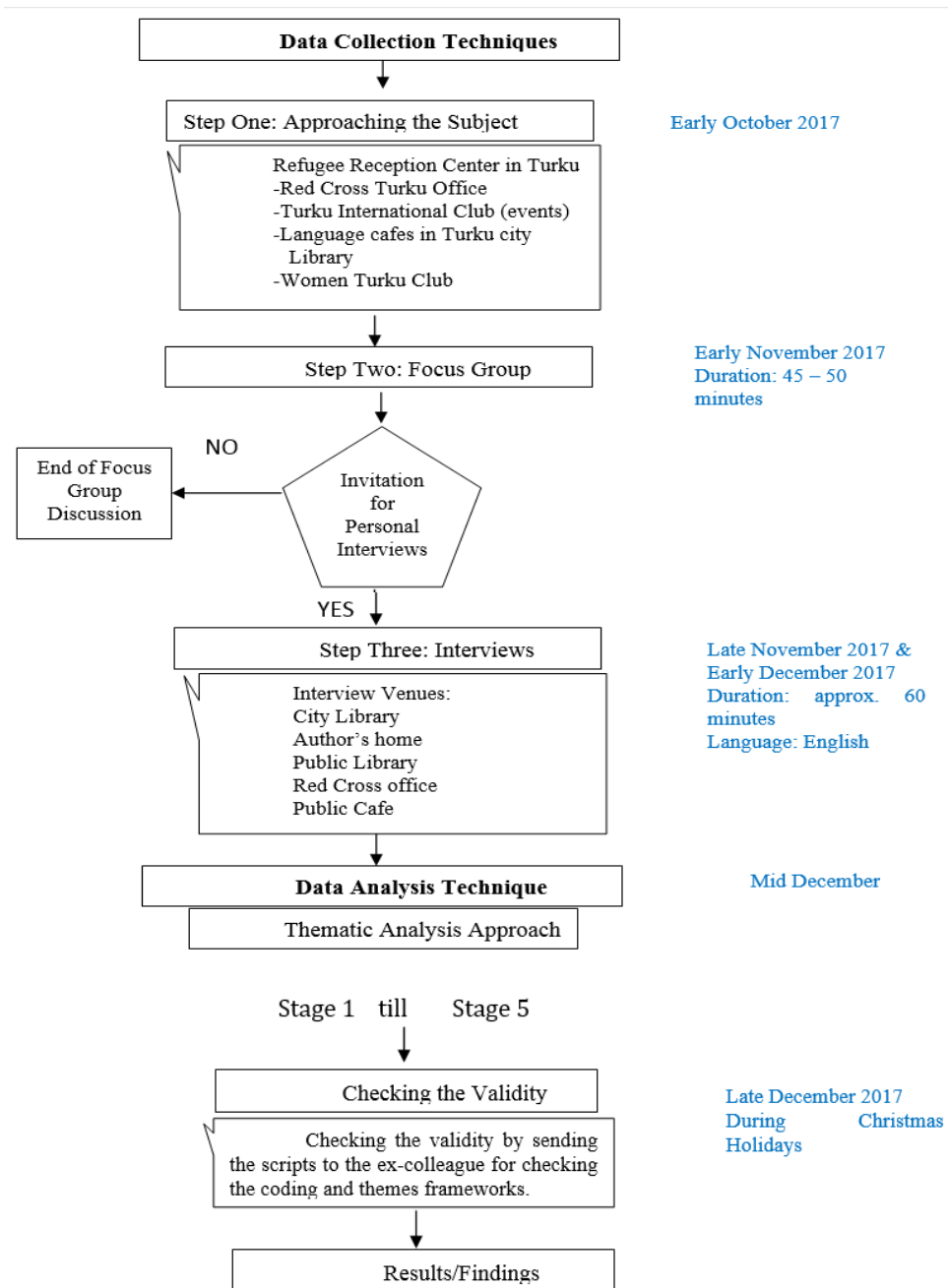
### **3.6 Ethical considerations**

In order to conduct the study, the ethical considerations regarding participants' privacy and other matters were highly noted. Some of the information about interviewees is anonymous such as their names. Some of the participants were conscious about disclosing information about their families, their reason for coming to Finland (forceful migration or volunteer migration) and their past experiences in origin country. I have highly considered such privacy concerns of participants during the research. The interviewees were offered the freedom to select the time and place for conducting the focus group discussion and interviews and were allowed to avoid answering any question which they were not at ease with. The interviews were not recorded (besides two interviews) as the participants were not convenient with audio or video recording of scripts. Moreover, the special cultural and religious concerns regarding food (such as 'Halal' food) were valued while inviting the interviewees on lunch for focus group discussion. Further, discussing about someone's religious factors can be a sensitive aspect. Therefore, I tend to ask only relevant questions about 'cultural' practices and tried to avoid on discussing about 'religious' opinions unless the participants mentioned by themselves. While discussing about their own cultural beliefs, opinions and practices, a full respect and dignity was provided in listening them - without any critique from my side.

### **3.7 Chapter conclusion**

The overview of data collection and analysis techniques is drawn in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3. 1 The summary of data collection process**

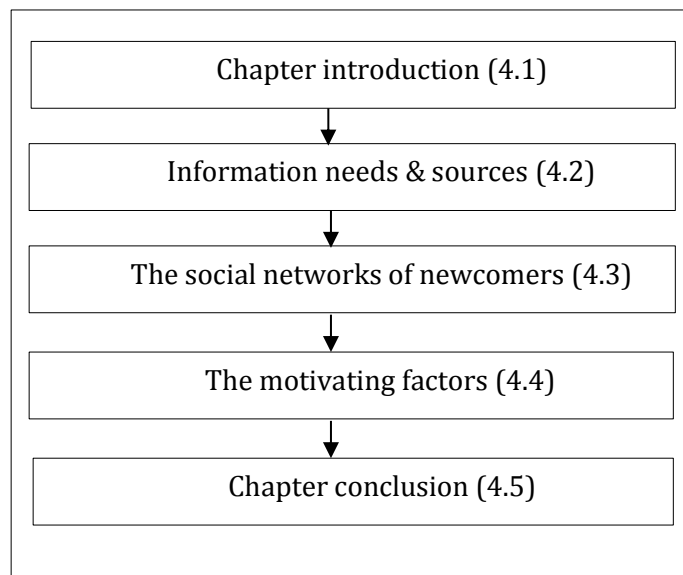


## 4. Chapter 4: Findings and Interpretations

### 4.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter explains the findings of the study derived from the focus group discussion, personal in-depth interviews and other printed and electronic material.

**Figure 4 Outline of Chapter 4**



### 4.2 Information needs and sources of newcomers

The first study question aimed at finding the types of information needs of participants in different settlement stages and the information sources they used to obtain certain information in each stage. The information needs and sources are classified into three different settlement stages, described by Mwarigha (2002). The duration of each stage is not estimated accurately, as it differs according to a country's government and immigration rules. The Finnish Immigration Services have not declared the defined period of time for a refugee's selection and application process. It can be estimated from previous records that, in most normal cases, the Finnish Immigration office can take few months or 1 - 2 years in

issuing the decision of residence permits to new refugees. The refugees are offered housing services in reception camps immediately and are allowed to undergo a general integration program upon arrival. However, an individual integration plan, in collaboration with the resettling municipalities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), is offered to the selected candidates with a positive decision from the Immigration Services. The integration settlement process is crucially important to promote equal opportunities for immigrants and refugees in Finland. An integration plan can be prolonged for three to five years and offers subsistence and employment allowances to enrolled candidates for a certain period. I assume those who have been in Finland less than five years are considered as 'newcomers' and have received their resident permits. All study participants are treated as newcomers, have certainly spent a certain period of time waiting for their permits and are currently enrolled in the integration plan.

However, this study applies the idea of Mwarigha's (2002) stages of settlement model and Caidi's et al. (2010, p.506) classification of information sources and presents (Table 4.1). The table shows the 'types of information needs' in different settlement stages and the 'forms of sources' used by the newcomers in each stage. The study retrieves and modifies the list of information needs and possible sources from the previous studies which examine the immigrants' information-related needs and useful sources (Caidi et al. 2010). The study has a clear intention to examine the *newcomers'* view about their information needs and sources and *not* the view of government and other agencies.

The participants who were considered as newcomers in Turku, Finland, consequently had their information needs labelled as general, official and personal in three settlement stages. The information sources are also marked along with the information needs section.

#### **4.2.1 General information needs and sources**

The first settlement stage takes place in the refugee reception centers, upon the arrival of newcomers in Finland. I prefer to use the term 'reception centers' and 'reception camps' synonymously in this thesis. The refugees' information needs in this stage refer to the information about basic and general needs for living in

Finland. The information on how and where to receive food, groceries, medicines, transportation and other related shopping material for initial setup in camps is highly demanded by new refugees. The primary information source for such details are the official representatives at the reception center and the volunteers of non-governmental organizations (e.g. The Red Cross Finland). These people provide a printed and digital city map to newcomers and arrange a small guided tour to the main city center. The tour guide introduces a few main general public places, such as the public bus service office (i.e. Foli in Tukru), parks, shopping malls, grocery stores, cafes and restaurants, pharmacies, city library, church, and the river Aura (the main attraction of the city Turku). Concerning the food, the reception center - with the help of voluntary organizations- offers prepared meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) for new refugees in the camps, during their early months of settlement. The study participants interestingly highlighted the 'food-issues' as a major concern in the immediate settlement stage at camp. Although prepared meals are available in the center, the Muslim refugees' preferences about 'Halal-food' are not sufficiently met in the camp. Therefore, they feel a strong need of information about where in the city to find the particular foods such as Halal chicken and the meat products in the city. The term 'Halal' refers to the preparation of some products, such as meat of certain animals, according to the Islamic rules for better consumption which requires slaughtering of an animal in a certain regulated way.

One of the informants mentioned:

*"I only had the option to eat vegetarian meals in cafeteria for the whole first month in the Pansio reception center and I was desperately looking for Halal restaurants and Halal grocery shop to buy some non-veg products and cook for myself. I did not like the taste of all the meals prepared at the reception center. The aroma and taste were quite different than my tradition food. I was merely surviving on bread, cake, eggs and boiled rice in my early weeks till I came to know about the Halal product shop in the city center and was allowed to start self-cooking in the center kitchen."*

[Participant 1]

The information need on how the participants can possibly contact, communicate and inform their family members and friends from their home-country, is also mentioned by informants. Some refugees immediately expressed

the need of contacting their families, to inform them about their safe arrival in Finland. The reception personnel offer them internet services with electronic gadgets (computers and mobile phones) temporarily - to communicate with their family members. Not all of the refugees have their own mobile phones when they arrive in Finland. In most cases, the mobile sets they carry from their home country are not compatible with the Finnish telecommunication network services. In such cases, the center also provides them with the information guide on local network service providers, their rates and service package details - translated into Arabic, Persian and Dari language - which is understood by most of the refugees coming from Arab countries.

Data from interviews further indicated that refugees' need for information about weather survival in Finland is also a main interest. The winters can be extremely cold, freezing, frigid and slippery in many areas of the country - which requires certain precautions and arrangements for the newcomers. For participants, facing the cold and snowy winters is first-time experience in their life and they stressed the need for proper guidance on surviving the winters. Even though the Red Cross representatives verbally explained the basic tips (drinking more coffee, wearing proper snow jackets, boots and gloves, etc.) to protect one self and enjoy the winters in Finland, the refugees struggled on their own for a few months to figure out the proper way to dress warmly, i.e. in multiple layers. One of the participants suggested that a small video clip on 'winter survival guide' can help newcomers learn necessary tips, warnings, do's and don'ts of winters in Finland. The visual presentation is a more informative and helpful way of communication. Further, another important information need about 'how can we enjoy the winters' was highlighted during the interviews. The participants were searching information about what kinds of possible indoor activities and sports take place in the winter and where and how can they join them.

Additionally, information about learning basic Finnish for everyday conversation at grocery stores, shopping centers and while traveling around the city - was also mentioned by the participants.

One informant highlighted:

*"When I went to Lidl (grocery store) to buy general everyday products such as milk, bread, soap, shampoo and frozen items, I found most of the products were labelled in a strange language (which I later came to know was Finnish) and not in English. I had to ask help from store assistant to translate certain products labels in English for me. (For example, there was various types of milk were presented on the shelf and I was looking for particularly un-flavoured milk, which was not easy to find due to language barrier) Thus, I feel that we should be provided an 'everyday-vocabulary learning guide' in our early weeks of settlement".*

[Participant 4]

Undoubtedly, the private organizations (e.g. The Red Cross, The Yhdessa etc.) and the volunteer gatekeepers are useful information sources in this regard. They help newcomers in learning basic conversation words and other relevant everyday vocabulary in the Finnish language with translation in their mother tongue. They provide the basic language learning services to newcomers by conducting multiple sessions.

Overall, most of the refugees' general information needs in the immediate settlement stage are effectively compassed by formal sources, including reception center personnels, NGOs representatives, government organizations, volunteers, gatekeepers and local service providers.

#### **4.2.2 Official information needs and sources**

The intermediate settlement stage appears in some refugees' timeline right after they receive the residence permit from the Finnish Immigration Service. It can possibly take a few years (one to three years in normal cases) to attain a residence permit. The permit offers certain rights to refugees to obtain several financial, legal, official and health benefits from the government. The newcomers are also liable to apply for a personal or shared housing apartments at this level and can leave the reception camps. The information concerning the housing services and rental rules and regulations for a desirable place is highlighted by all candidates. The participant whose family member (her uncle, who came as a refugee a few years back) resides in the city found it easy to search for accommodation, as she received help from her uncle about the residence application process. The candidates, in most cases, have no familiar connections in the new city, besides the reception center representatives and volunteers, who possibly assist them with all



necessary information on finding, renting and living in an independent accommodation. The participants find it difficult to learn about the rental procedures, long waiting queues, inspections, contracts and other legal terms to apply and live in an independent residence. One of the informants mentioned:

*"I was not aware of the fact that I have to apply for a house via online and have to wait for several months for a positive reply. It took me 4 months to get a suitable apartment for me after submitting application. The online application procedure was also new and difficult for me. The form was in Finnish language and was quite long of 5 pages. I had never passed such formal and lengthy processes in my country to rent an apartment and we normally used to rent housing in an informal and verbal manner in my homeland."*

[Participant 3]

Few other participants' priorities of official information needs were employment-related details, language learning courses, education-related details, health and medical benefits, family reunion procedures and travel/license rules. One of the informants commented that she was concerned to know the proper application process, requirements and processing time for applying for asylum for her mother who is in Syria. The participant has approached the local Immigration Services office to access the relevant information regarding this and has successfully finished the application for her mother, under the family-reunion asylum program. The volunteer organizations' representatives and Immigration office played an important role in providing the right, complete and understandable form of information to the candidate in this case. Besides this, the local employment centers, local language school, training institutes, public health care centers and volunteers accommodated the official information needs of new refugees in the intermediate settlement stage in Finland.

#### **4.2.3 Personal information needs and sources**

The third settlement stage is the integration of newcomers into the host society, by making them understand, adjust, connect and be able to meet with local social and cultural norms. This process takes an indefinite period of time and varies for all the individuals depending on their ability, willingness and skills to perceive the new culture, language, values, lifestyle and society. In fact, integration has different meaning for every individual new refugee in the system. For some participants, integration refers to the situation where they can easily and freely enjoy their own

cultural and religious practices in a new country, while others mentioned that integration shows the ability of newcomers to understand and enjoy the host peoples' cultural norms, values, lifestyle and language. These various opinions concerning integration lead to a demand for customized and personalized type of information needs at this stage.

A personal type of information need refers to the information that is related to the individual's concerns, issues and matters in the integration process in Finland. The personal information needs may occur in early two settlement stages, but are more valued in the integration stage. The data indicated that information about the social connections is mainly underlined by all the participants in this level. They eagerly wished to integrate in the host society by making new local and international friends from various cultural backgrounds. The participants remarked that they initially browsed the online social groups, chat rooms, Facebook pages and other social media channels to establish networks with the local Finnish people. They equally searched for friends' connections who belong to their home country (co-ethnic people) and migrated to Finland earlier. It is worth mentioning that the Red Cross offers the volunteer Befrienders services for new refugees in which they introduce a portal of a few volunteers, such as a group of new refugees, old refugees and local Finnish people. A new refugee can select a desirable person for friendship from the portal and start having meetings with that person in an informal way. This is a helpful source of information and friendship platform for a newcomer who is in need of a social connection, company of a good friend and knowledge about the new city. This also helps to learn and practice the local language with that new partner.

The individuals are also found seeking information about how they can likely deal with the feeling of loneliness, social isolation and emotional instability. The need for social networking with new friends is offered as a solution to the above mentioned feelings of illness. Participants believe that engaging in various social connections, activities such as practicing personal hobbies and attending the local festivals and events can possibly reduce the sense of social-isolation. Some informants discovered that information about places and services of their own interest is highly desirable. For example, one informant mentioned her interest in

cooking and baking. She searched for information on 'cooking courses in Turku' online and managed to find the Swedish Adult Education Center of Abo (Turku, Finland) offering a wide array of courses for language, handicrafts, gymnastics, yoga, nursing, cooking and baking. Similarly, a participant indicated her interest in playing with kids and spending time with older people. She was in seek of information about nearby parks, playgrounds and old-age homes where she can spend her time and be involved with local people. She managed to speak with her teacher in the language cafe session and obtained the information about attending an upcoming 'Open day event of elderly Finns' in the city. She was invited to join the event and meet with local elderly people.

The informants further notified that information about their home-country news and events is also relevant for them. One of the participants agreed that she is willing to pay half of her monthly funds to buy her country's satellite equipment which allows reception of her home-country television channels and news in her mother language.

Besides this, the participants also seek information about where, how and with whom they can practice and celebrate their own traditional, cultural and religious activities in the city. As it is mentioned earlier that a few participants' perception about 'integration' refers to the freedom of practicing their own cultural and traditional moments in a new country, the participants clearly mentioned that they need to seek a social network of some friends sharing common culture and tradition in Turku - to better integrate in society and to feel at home. A number of volunteer gatekeepers play a vital role in introducing newcomers to the integrated refugees, to create a co-ethnic social network.

Overall, the personal information needs are quite individualized and personalized, based on the individuals' situation and views in the integration process. The social networks are highlighted as the main source of information for many new refugees. Additionally, the volunteer gatekeepers, translators, language cafe networks, Friends-Matching Portal by the Red Cross and online social media platforms are meaningful sources for newcomers in this stage.

**Table 4. 1 Types of information needs and sources of participants**

| <b>Information Needs</b>  | <b>Information Sources</b>   |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Settlement Stage 1: Immediate</b></p> <p><u><b>General Information Needs:</b></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Information about food (special Halal-food), grocery and shopping stores, transport, city (place).</li> <li>-Information on contacting their families</li> <li>-Information on weather-survival guide</li> <li>-Information on basic local language</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Refugee Reception Center representatives</li> <li>-Official representatives</li> <li>-Volunteers of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (The Red Cross Finland, Yhdessa etc.)</li> <li>-Gatekeepers</li> <li>-Local service providers</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Settlement Stage 2: Intermediate</b></p> <p><u><b>Official Information Needs:</b></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Information on how to access local everyday systems such as housing services, employment, language training, education, health and medical benefits, family reunion application process and travel/license rules.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-NGOs</li> <li>-Public offices (e.g. Finnish Immigration Services)</li> <li>-Volunteer organizations' representatives</li> <li>-Public health centers</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Settlement Stage 3: Integration</b></p> <p><u><b>Personal Information Needs:</b></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Information about how to make social connections</li> <li>-Information about ways to deal with loneliness and social-isolation</li> <li>-Information about personal hobbies and interest's places and services</li> <li>-Information about home-country news and events</li> <li>-Information about where, how and with whom the home-country traditional and cultural activities can take place.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Social networks</li> <li>-Online social-media platforms</li> <li>-Language cafes' network</li> <li>-The Friends-Matching portal offered by Red Cross</li> <li>-Gatekeepers</li> <li>-Volunteer translators</li> </ul>                              |

### **4.3 The social networks of newcomers**

This research has its main focus on the refugees as individuals and explains their preferences of socialization, which help them to effectively integrate in the host society. The study explores two diverse types of social networks that the newcomers maintain in Turku, Finland. The participants select certain networks due to certain factors. The first type of socialization is the 'multinational networks' in which the informants consider the host country's communities and groups effective for mingling, knowing and seeking information. These types of networks are extremely valuable in providing general and practical information support about the host-culture, language and other necessary knowledge for initial settlement of the newcomers. The second type of socialization is the 'co-ethnic networks' which refer to the same-cultural networks in which the informants feel more comfortable in seeking and sharing information.

#### **4.3.1 The Multi-national networks**

The multinational networks refer to the collection of various local sponsors, volunteers (groups and individuals) and other local communities and associations that offer places and opportunities for refugees for get-together.

##### ***4.3.1.1 The sponsorship ties***

Upon interviewing about what type of multinational networks the participants consult, they mentioned a number of few different social platforms of the volunteer sponsors (individuals, families and organizations). One mentioned that 'the reception center's management people were so friendly and helpful. They guided me in the immigration application process of my Resident Permit and in the process of finding my own apartment'. Another said:

*'The Red Cross people introduced me to a Finnish family, a middle-aged couple, in Turku. They were the volunteer sponsors for a few female new refugees in the city. They invited me along with the two other girls from camp, at their house for lunch. They showed us around their beautiful house. I frequently visit this family even after leaving the camp. I find such sponsors are quite useful for learning Finnish language and Finns' culture'.*

[Participant 7]

Interestingly, one interviewee stated that the Red Cross organization offers help for 'loneliness' of newcomers and help them in finding long-term or one-time friends via registration at the Red Cross Turku regional office. This type of friendship platforms encourage the new refugees to attach with the volunteer Finnish local members and socialize to attain information about local language, culture and way of life. The sponsor-friend that she selected was a Finnish lady who helped her with initial settlement problems, accompanied her for coffee, walked with her to different shopping malls and consulted her psychological needs.

In addition, during the interviews, some volunteer church groups, local cultural organizations, volunteer sponsor groups and private sponsor individuals were also mentioned as valuable social connections for the newcomers.

#### ***4.3.1.2 Community association gatherings***

The community associations play an important role in creating social networking platforms and several activities to bring both parties, the new refugees and the Finnish people, together and share information about many aspects. In this regard, the participants mentioned some of the community gatherings organized by associations such as the Red Cross, the Turku International Club, the Turku Women's Club and the Yhdessa Organization etc. For instance, one interviewee highlighted the activities and social meetings of the 'Turku International Club' that were held every second Tuesday at Vimma center, Turku. The club arranges different cultural activities, presentations, talk-on-coffee and causal interaction sessions with new refugees, immigrants and foreign students. She said that 'a recent club meeting was held to present the 'Iraqi culture' by Iraqi refugees. It was a form of cultural exchange activity and an informative session for both refugees and the Finnish people.' These types of mutual socialization activities, indeed, improve the ability of newcomers to learn about new cultures and share information about their own lifestyles. As Felleson (2003) mentioned in Berry (2005 p.205), "Social relationships and cultural exchange between refugees and

the host communities can reduce the competition, isolation and segregation between the two groups”.

Another participant mentioned other social meetings and events organized by the volunteer groups in Turku. She mentioned:

*“I attended one of the cultural meetings at Vimma center, Turku in which I was invited to wear my own traditional dress in the cultural-exhibition. I was so happy to wear my own cultural dressing for the first time in Finland. It was interesting to see local Finnish people’s cultural apparel too.”*

[Participant 1]

One participant exceptionally said that she prefers the community association meetings to find some local friends with whom she can discuss personal and help-seeking types of matters. She said that:

*“I found a volunteer Swedish-Finnish girlfriend in one of the social gathering at Vimma center and I enjoy discussing my personal matters with her. She helped me with the shifting of my old home to the new one and she also provides me information about official and practical matters as she knows the city well.”*

[Participant 8]

However, it is noted that the newcomers mostly attend these kinds of social meetings and association gatherings in their early settlement stages and slowly exit from these platforms. On a positive note, it shows that they have become independent to establish their own social circles, while, on a negative note, it could be a risk that such candidates might completely be cut off from the multi-cultural networks and may remain in their own cultural networks. This is the case with most of the study participants, which is not a recommended situation of separation and ineffective integration for the refugees.

#### ***4.3.1.3 Language cafes***

The ‘language cafes’ are some of the most popular activities among the participants during the intermediate period of an integration process. The Turku City Library facilitates the newcomers’ access to special activity rooms and arrangements for conducting language learning sessions in the library. In Turku, the language cafes

invite multi-ethnic groups of people, including refugees, immigrants, international students and local Finnish people and provide a chance to learn, speak and practice Finnish together. These events are mentioned by a few participants as an entertaining source of learning the Finnish language and meeting with the Finnish people. The participants found that the language cafes are not only organized for the sake of language learning, but also offer various informative sessions once a month. One informant mentioned an informative session named 'Know-Finland' that was organized at a language cafe. The host talked about the Finnish weather and the ways to survive winters, the Finnish special food and farms, the Finnish-Sauna culture, a few aspects of the Finnish history with Sweden and Russia and about the 'Great Fire of Turku'. She said that 'the session was very effective in providing additional information to my existing knowledge about Finns and Finland'.

One drawback of the language cafes' network is that, it fails in attracting a sufficient number of local volunteers to join the events (except on few occasions). This limits the chances for the newcomers to interact with the new Finnish people frequently. Mostly, the people from the same ethnic (Arab, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Somalia) groups are found in the language meetings, with little proportion of the Finnish peoples' participation. This again creates the risk of leaving the refugees in a small world of same ethnic people in the long run.

#### ***4.3.1.4 Learning institutes***

Participants briefly mentioned the importance of learning institutes, such as language school, city training institute and local vocational school as sources of socialization in Turku. The informants basically join these institutes for the sake of learning language, skills, and trainings for profession and education. They meet with local Finnish friends and other nationality people in such networks and prefer to establish long-term relations with these institutes' networks.



#### **4.3.2 The Co-ethnic networks**

The second type of social networks that the study participants mentioned are the 'co-ethnic networks' which refer to those social connections that they chose in a limited circle of people with same ethnicity, same culture and same tradition. They build a network for socialization and entertainment within a specific ethnicity, such as networks in camps, Muslim communities, foody networks and strong social ties.

##### ***4.3.2.1 The camp's social ties***

The regional head of refugee reception center in Turku mentioned that the refugees are initially invited at the reception center and then shifted to different camps working under the supervision of government and non-governmental organizations. The refugees spend a considerable amount of time in these camps, in some cases 1 to 2 years while waiting for the decision of Residence Permit. Some of the refugees live in the camps for a long time while expecting a positive response to their housing applications. Considering the large number of refugees who have arrived in recent years, there are normally long queues and impatient waiting time for houses applications of the refugees. As a result, large groups of new refugees are bound to live in the camps for a certain period of their life and can certainly structure a social life around them. It also impacts their preferences in seeking and sharing information in certain social ties in the camps.

Furthermore, there is no doubt that the refugees are allowed to go out and visit shopping centers, churches, schools, sport centers, bars, cafes, restaurants, libraries and other public places in Turku. However, they have certain time limits and rules to be followed while staying in the camps, for example, they are not allowed to stay out late at night and must return to the camp by 8 pm. This limits their opportunity to socialize with other people outside the camps (e.g. night parties etc.). As one informant mentioned during the interview that she had very limited time to roam around the city center and other public places - besides weekends - to make friends and to join any activity in the city. She only had a few

friends living in the same camp. She continued to maintain the social ties with the same friends closely even in her third year of the settlement in Turku.

While staying and spending the time together in a camp, they find friends with common religion ,which brings them even closer to one another. An informant mentioned that she met another Muslim elderly female in the camp and was quite comfortable in sharing her feelings, background and future plans with her. She was an effective source of information for the participant in many ways. She communicated the information about the upcoming events in the Turku City Center and in the Turku City Library to the participant. This shows that the friends' network (strong social ties) in the camps was the essential information sources for the refugees.

#### ***4.3.2.2 Muslim communities***

Turku has invited a majority of refugees from the Muslim Asian countries including Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Somalia etc. in the last few years. Certainly, the group of the participants of my study belongs to the same religion of Islam. They have formulated their own Muslim communities for celebrating religious festivals, arranging religious events and other multiple gatherings. The 'Muslim Women Club' in Turku- is an extension of these communities - which consists of only *Muslim females* of different ages. The participants mentioned that the social gatherings and activities of the club are the most informative, entertaining and enjoyable activities for them. The connections with the other females in the club make them feel familial and comfortable in seeking the information on any issue and sharing their current and past life experiences.

The participants sadly mentioned that they have a few major annual religious festivals, such as the 'Eid-ul-Fitr' , the 'Eid-ul-Adha' and the 'Ramadan'. These are the occasions of fasting, cooking, eating and enjoying together with the families and the big communities. They feel alone and depressed on these events in Finland, as they have no family ties and friends to celebrate with. Therefore, they have built some Muslim social gatherings with friends from the camps, schools, and other social media platforms. One mentioned that

*"I invited one of my Finnish class mates from the training school – on dinner – during the 'Ramadan' (the month of fasting for Muslims around the world). She was happy to learn about the Muslim's concept about the Ramadan. She also talked to other group members in the gathering."*

[Participant 5]

Another participant mentioned the importance of Muslim communities' members to consult and seek information regarding health issues, especially with other senior female members in the group. She mentioned:

*"I was in fever and strong flu during my early days in Finland. I consulted another Muslim lady in the group to advise me with some practical traditional home remedies for flu. I did not feel the need to refer to the doctor immediately, but trusted the other senior female member for the information in this regard".*

[Participant 3]

Additionally, the participants eagerly agreed that they feel the emotional and psychological support in participating and meeting with the other Muslim community people and friends. In this respect, they have also joined the online social platforms, such as Facebook groups of Muslims communities from Finland, Sweden and other nearby countries.

#### **4.3.2.3 Foody networks**

The traditional food is something that inevitably brings the people with common taste together. The participants are strongly passionate about cooking and enjoy their traditional food and the group-cooking sessions. Upon asking what 'food' means to you, one candidate mentioned that 'I do not like to cook food when I am alone to eat. I enjoy the company of some friends who share the same taste of food with me'. The newcomers are quite upset with the food cooked and served by the management in the camps in their early settlement days. They prefer their own traditional and home-made food over the ready-made food items from the market. The foody networks allow them to spend more time together, share the life concerns and find some information accidentally. As one informant mentioned:

*"I came to know from one of the foody network's member lady that I can actually attain the opportunity of the free health screening (breast-screening) in*

*upcoming week in the nearest health center of refugees. She has got this information from her public nurse and I was not aware of the news before".*

[Participant 6]

Interestingly, another participant highlighted that the foody networks are not only about food but more. She has successfully sought an effective information support and monetary help from a few group members. She coded that:

*"One of the group member helped me with some money for buying the present for my mother (who lives in Syria) on 'The Mothers' day'. I also managed to gain information about how, where and for how much I can send the gift to my mother by the post in Turku. "*

[Participant 8]

In Turku, the participants particularly have developed a Food club with the name of 'I love Halal'. The club members frequently arrange one-dish party on every second week and celebrate friends' birthdays frequently. The parties are normally held at the club member's home or at common kitchens. The club members find it comfortable to share their life stories, good and bad experiences and other problems at work etc. in these networks.

#### **4.3.2.4 Strong ties networks**

In this study, the strong ties networks refer to those participants whose family members or relatives are pre-arrived in Finland under the refugee quota. This network also contains the family members and friends of the participants living in their origin country. The informants strongly favored their family members as a source of seeking emotional support, information about dealing with loneliness and other matters relevant to their health and finances. The participants with any of their family members in Turku share their financial or practical problems primarily with their families. They are the source of knowledge about initial settlement issues for the newcomers in many cases. The rest, the newcomers with their family members in the home country, tend to communicate with their families via social media channels. They mentioned that international calls are very expensive in Finland and hereby, they manage to communicate with their families on WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter mostly.

For instance, one of the study candidates had her mother and two elder brothers who migrated to Finland a few years earlier than her. She did not work hard to establish a new social network, especially with the co-ethnic community, because her mother was already involved in some Muslim communities. She had a strong connection with the neighborhood of same ethnic members. She received various types of emotional and practical support from her immediate family members. This network can be described as a strong connection (Pugliesi, 1998) in which a person receives practical and psychological information and support from the same connection. The candidate hardly feels any need to contact her friends back in the home country to seek or share any information and help.

#### **4.4 The motivating factors**

This study has an objective to identify the motivating factor/s that influence the participants' choices to select certain types of co-ethnic social networks and lead towards the construction of the 'small-world of information'. Thus, this section reflects the enforcing factor of 'culture' which forces the newcomers to build social networks with the same-ethnicity community rather than engaging in the multinational local networks.

##### **4.4.1 'Culture' as a factor**

When interviewees were asked to define culture, most of them defined it as the way of everyday life and how we behave in our ways of living. One of the participants said that the 'culture is about the people way of talking with one another in a society'. Another one defined culture as 'the way in which the people behave and talk' and 'the lifestyle of people such as the food and the drinking concept'. Most of the interviewees painted culture as 'a representation of the traditional food, the festivals and the events'.

When the participants asked about the major motivation behind participating in certain co-ethnic social networks and preferring these networks to multinational social networks, they said that the 'cultural similarities and differences' are the main reasons. The cultural similarities and differences in terms of the *behavior of people, lifestyle (living style and food preference) and festivals* are

the main interests for choosing specific kinds of social networks during their integration process in Finland (Refer to Table 4.2). They started featuring some differences among their own and the Finnish culture in terms of people, lifestyle and festivals.

#### **4.4.1.1 People**

The 'people' play a vital role in participants' integration process in a new culture and strongly impact their desire to participate in the social networks and overcome the informational isolation.

A participant mentioned:

*"I do miss my home country mainly because of its 'culture and people'. Meeting with the people from my own country and culture gives me a good feeling of belongingness rather interacting with the local people. I feel there is a huge difference in our culture and the Finnish peoples' perception about the various life aspects"*

[Participant 2]

According to the participants, the people's behavior and their lifestyle represent the society and its culture. When talking about their own home culture, they mentioned collectively that the peoples' behavior is hospitable, warm, welcoming and friendly. One said that 'we shake hands and maintain an eye contact upon meeting new people of the same gender and pass the greetings by saying 'assalam o alikum' (peace be upon you) to which a response is 'walikum salam' (and peace be upon you too). This makes us comfortable in interacting with any new or a strange person in our school, home or office'. One interviewee added that 'we, females, greet with one another by exchanging hugs and cheek-kissing with sometimes those we just met'. Another spoke that 'we interact with new people, with such an open and welcoming attitude, that he/she can ask help, information and share his/her personal problem easily with the host. Our conversation is full of the words and typically have less gaps in the conversations'. While mentioning the Finnish peoples' behavior, the participants agreed on the perception of a reserved, less-talkative and straightforward Finn. They conceptualized the Finnish people as rarely entering into conversation with strangers and as being found silent in most public places. The Finnish people have

a reputation and self-impression of being reserved. Silence is treated as a part of communication for most Finns and this is exactly adverse than the study participants' own cultural behavior. As one interviewee said that 'In my early days in Finland, I noticed that it is not an easy task to simply talk to any new Finn on the road and ask information about maps, places, buses routes etc. Although I was not familiar with the Finnish language, I still felt that the true reluctance was actually in 'approaching and talking' to the local people due to their culture. They look very quiet and are not involved in any supporting gestures while greeting. They often pass the smiles without saying any word - when you look at them and it made me feel good'.

#### ***4.4.1.2 Lifestyle***

The lifestyle is described by the participants as part of a culture and the way of life and food preferences of the individuals.

#### **Lifestyle**

Expressing lifestyle as a part of the culture, the interviewees mainly pointed out that our living and eating patterns and preferences strongly differs from the locals in various ways. A candidate mentioned that 'we live with our parents and big families with many members in a joint single house and are more attached with our relatives. Our family and family roots are highly connected to us and a reason of joy and pleasure in our everyday life. Our social circle indeed starts and revolves around our own family members including parents, siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles. Further, we have a very close relation with our neighbours, where we normally pay several visits a week'. In contrast, in Finland, mostly, the people live in their houses independently and face less interactions with their families. It is not very common to knock on the neighbour's door and communicate without any emergent cause. The migrants find themselves limited to their home walls, with no connection to their neighbours, because most Finnish people do not get familiar immediately. The participants further found that the Finnish people are certainly particular about their own tasks and do not unnecessarily interfere in others' life matters. This straightforward behavior of the Finns has a disturbing element for

the refugees which makes them feel more isolated and unfit in the host society. This further leads participants towards difficulties in socializing with the local communities and directs them towards the specific social networks of their own ethnic people.

### **Food preferences**

Interestingly, the interviewees highlighted 'food' as a vital aspect of a society's culture. One mentioned that 'culture represents what we eat, how we eat and when we eat'. Another said that 'the ingredients, methods of preparation and types of food vary among different cultures'. The participants seem strongly attached with their own culinary traditions, tastes and cultural dishes. About their own cultural food, they mainly mentioned that 'We like stuffed vegetables (especially tomatoes stuffed with rice called 'Yalanchi') and eat more rice, lamb, lentils with lemon juice and yogurt. We cook beef rice with fruits for our guests and on special occasions. We normally eat little spicy and sour meals with extra red pepper sauce and lemon taste.' About the Finnish food culture, the participants were only able to mention a few obvious differences that they were able to notice during their stay in Finland. They said that 'the Finnish people normally drink milk in the lunch time, while we prefer milk in the morning. They eat various types of breads and mostly eat the rye-bread belovedly. These whole grain breads are assuredly healthy, but a little hard and dry for us to chew. Plus, the organic food products are a little expensive in Finland, while we have these fresh organic food items in our everyday use at normal prices in our country. The Finns usually consume less spicy food and are fond of baked 'potatoes' with little peppers, while we adversely prefer the spicy and the less-baked items in our culture'. However, the participants are found in deep love with their own cultural food and do enjoy the company of those friends with whom they appreciate cooking, eating and enjoying traditional taste.

Furthermore, the interviewees' food preferences and edibility of some meals are influenced by their personal choices, cultural group and religion. For instance, the dietary laws for the use and preparation of certain animal foods follow the Islamic spiritual health rules for all the Muslims. Similarly, pork and consumption of alcohol beverages and food products containing an alcohol



element (such as wine chocolates etc.) are prohibited for the Muslims. Since all of the study participants belong to the same cultural (with minor variances) an religious background, they share similar opinions. Such religious dietary rules about food and drinking consumption, restrict them in engaging with the Finnish community. One highlighted that 'I assume that drinking alcohol is quite normal in Finland unlike my home country. People are having alcoholic drinks in their hands during the lunch meals, in cafes, and with fast foods, which is new and a little awkward for me.' Another mentioned 'I usually do not appear in most gatherings with my Finnish school-mates on the weekends - even though I wish to participate in such happenings to know more about the Finnish language and the culture, but I am scared of the 'binge-drinking-culture' in such parties'. Moreover, the participants pleasingly described that they possess a culture of a 'collective-eating' behavior, in which they enjoy their everyday meals on a big table and with all family members together, while in Finland, they are encouraged to adopt the 'solo-eating' pattern for most of their meals, as the Finns normally enjoy their meals in their own company. Therefore, the participants are actively eager to participate in the co-ethnic social communitys' 'Foody Networks' frequently to enjoy the feeling of collectiveness.

#### ***4.4.1.3 Festivals***

The interviewees additionally considered 'festivals' as an integral part of their community culture and revealed a few of the traditional and religious common festivals that connect them with the co-ethnic social network members. One mentioned 'We share same religious festivals, such as the Ramadan (We do fast throughout the month between sunrise and sunset), the Eid-ul-Fitr (We do celebrate the ending of long fasting month on this festival) and the Eid-ul-Adha (festival of sacrificing the animal for the sake of God charitably). These are extremely important and big calendar events for us to celebrate with our families, friends and others. Another said that 'The holy month of Ramadan - which normally comes during summers - unites us for praying, fasting, preparing meals and getting ready for the Eid-ul-Fitr. Such festivals are all about our people, our

families, our culture and our religious faith'. Since the participants are living far from their families and friends from the country of origin, they feel a strong need for some friends of the same religion in Finland.

Regarding the Finnish festivals, the participants did notice huge happenings on 'The Christmas' and the 'Vappu Day' celebrations in Finland. 'Christmas' is a celebration of the Christian tradition ceremony across the Europe. Finland has a special event of the 'Christmas Eve', a night before Christmas with the traditional speech of peace, the Finnish saunas, the Christmas dinners with families and exchanging gifts. While the 'Vappu Day' shows the custom of the graduate students' celebrations at the midnight on 30th April, with sporting the traditional white caps, and arranging open-air picnics on the next day in parks across the country. The participants said that they respect the Finnish festivals and do enjoy these events along with the other local friends. One mentioned that 'I have placed and decorated the Christmas tree in my home. I am positively looking for ways to integrate in the Finnish society and to learn about their festivals, but I still find it difficult to make new Finnish friends'. Another added on that 'I found Finnish people socializing and celebrating the Vappu Day in Turku in a big crowd. I managed to communicate with local families at the public park for the first time. It was a good experience'.

**Table 4. 2 The summary of participant's responses**

| <b>Cultural elements</b>  | <b>Cultural similarities</b>   | <b>Cultural differences</b>   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>People</b>   | Our people are talkative, open, hospitable and friendly in everyday conversation.  | Finnish people are reserved, less talkative and straight forward.   |
| <b>Lifestyle</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Living style</b></li> <li>• <b>Food preferences</b></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-We live in joint big families and friendly relationships with neighbors.</li> <li>- Ingredients, taste, method of preparation of food is unique.</li> <li>- Special dietary religious rules to follow in our culture.</li> <li>- Certain food products are prohibited in our culture such as alcohol and pork.</li> <li>-Collective-eating patterns</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Finnish people mostly live independently and less/no interactive with neighbors.</li> <li>-Ingredients, taste, method of preparation of food are different than among us.</li> <li>-Alcohol drinking-culture is common.</li> <li>-Solo-eating patterns</li> </ul> |
| <b>Festivals</b>  | - Muslim festivals (Ramadan, Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Adha) are occasions of families gathering, fasting, cooking, eating, dressing-up and celebrations.  | -The 'Christmas' and 'Vappu Day' are the two local Finnish occasions of gathering and celebrations.   |

## **4.5 Chapter Conclusion**

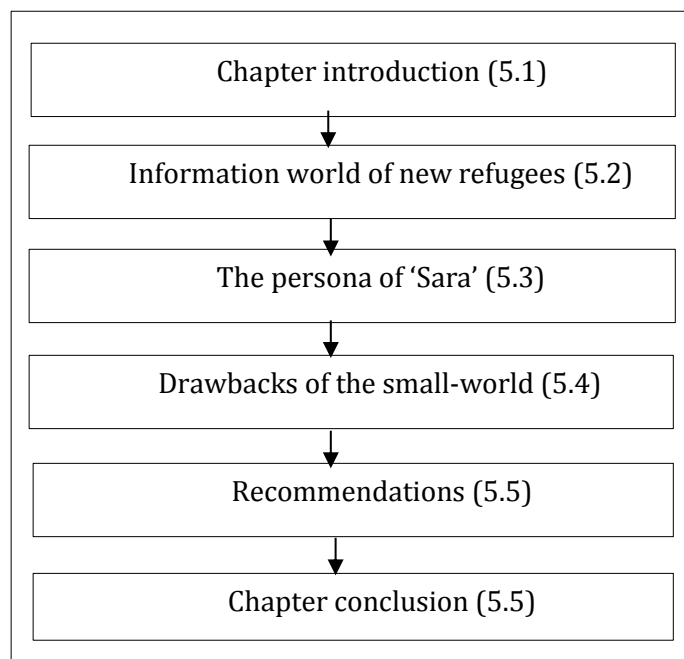
This chapter has presented the findings and interpretations in three different sections, including the information needs and sources of newcomers, the types of social networks of newcomers and the motivating factors for selecting such networks. Firstly, the general and official information needs of the newcomers are fulfilled by government and private volunteers and other official sources. The personal types of information, such as health, financial matters and problems, are mainly sorted out via social networks of co-ethnic friends. Secondly, two different types of social networks were mentioned by the participants that they use during the integration process. The multinational social connection contains sponsorship ties, association gatherings, language cafes and learning institutes. Co-ethnic social networks consist of the camps' social ties, foody networks, Muslim communities and strong ties. The participants further mentioned the 'cultural similarities and differences' as a motivating factor for selecting and preferring the co-ethnic networks. They defined culture as a combination of a few elements such as people, lifestyle and festivals.

## 5. Chapter 5: Discussion

### 5.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter deals with the explanation of the three research questions in relation to the concepts of ‘small-world’ and ‘open-world’ theories. I will explain what types of information needs and sources are preferred by the newcomers in the small-world and in the open-world of information respectively. However, the study shows its main interest in finding the reasons that motivate the new refugees in building the ‘*small-world*’ of information and what types of needs and social networks they consult in this process. The ‘open-world’ of information is not covered in detail in this study, besides highlighting a few aspects such as the basic information needs, the social networks and the basic motivating factors. Also, how the motivating factor of the ‘cultural similarities’ impacts the participants’ choices of ‘separation’ (according to Berry’s (1997) theory) and how the concept of ‘separation’ will lead to the creation of the ‘small-world’ of information (according to Chatman’s (1991) theory) – is discussed in this Chapter.

**Figure 5 Outline of Chapter 5**



## **5.2 The Information world of the new refugees**

This section presents the discussion of the participants' information needs, their information-seeking sources, the types of social networks they use to seek and share information, and the motivating factors.

In this study, I use the term 'information world' which refers to the set of refugees' information needs, sources and social networks in which they seek and share information in a new country. An examination of the information world of new refugees reveals that the information is perceived by the participants on two different levels. Each category of the information contains a few factors that promote or hinder the information seeking and sharing.

The information world of new refugees contains two levels of information, i.e.

The small world of information

The open world of information

The theoretical support from the theory of 'information world' (Chatman and Habermas) helped in forming and discussing the first two levels of the information world of new refugees in this section. According to the theories, information is viewed from different perspectives of small social units and through a large societal lens. The information world is influenced by some immediate and broader factors of a society. This study has modified the terms of the theory slightly. The study presents the 'small-world' in the same expression and replaces the term 'lifeworld' with 'open-world' of information. The small-world of information shows that the participants seek and share information in their immediate surroundings and with people of the same ethnicity and culture in co-ethnic social networks, while the open-world refers to the participants' information seeking behavior in a broader social context, in which they choose multicultural social networks to seek and share information. Ideally, an individual's information world should be built on both the small-world and the open-world - complementing each other in seeking information in small social units (co-ethnic social networks) and larger social units (multicultural networks) concurrently. However, the findings of this

study apparently reveal that the participants are hugely in favor of establishing the small-world of information rather than the open-world, due to certain factors. In this section, the two level of information world of new refugees will be discussed.

### **5.2.1 The small-world of information**

The participants strongly mentioned their need to find and meet with friends of the same culture and ethnicity. The strong craving to meet new people of the same culture, language, customs and believes can easily be noticed in all participants. They seem to be continually searching for information on the internet (social media platforms), in Friends-Matching portals and asking gatekeepers about the co-ethnic social networks such as, Muslim communities, traditional food and cooking networks and other possible ties with people from their own country or with friends sharing some common cultural elements.

The small-world of information of newcomers is a combination of three aspects, i.e. the camp's small world, the help-seeking world and the world of cultural similarities. These elements collectively establish the refugees' small-world of information.

#### ***5.2.1.1 The camp's small world***

The 'small-world' journey starts with the refugees' arrival at the local reception centers/camps in Finland. The unexpected and unpredictable long-stay in these camps sadly leads to a situation of '*Camps are their whole world*' for new refugees. They are bound to spend a considerable amount of time (a few years in some cases) in reception camps until they receive the notification on their Resident Permit applications from the Finnish Immigration Services. The camp's small world is made of the long term relationships of refugees that they maintain outside the camps. Here, I agree with Merton's (1968, p. 447) view of the 'locals' as 'insiders'. The new refugees are presented as 'insiders' at this level of information in which their everyday reality is connected to the reception camps. Their social networking interests are also limited in the camps. The knowledge of the larger society (the open-world of information) is apparently of minimal interest for the participants at this level. I also agree with Shils's (1957) opinion of seeing the

'small-world' concept from the lens of 'location' as a key element. At this level of information, the respondents are more comfortable in seeking and sharing information in the small-world of the camp, because they are concerned with its availability, its presence and concrete nature, rather than going out of the camp to see other options. Further, most of the social network sources, such as Muslim communities, food networks and strong ties networks have members/friends from refugee camps. Thus, in this study, the 'location' actually refers to the 'long stay' of the new refugees at the same location (i.e. the reception camp) with people of the same ethnic background. It actually explains why the study participants indeed have established a 'small-world of information' around them - as they find comfort, ease and trust in seeking and sharing information with people located and living in the common surroundings.

#### ***5.2.1.2 The Help-Seeking world***

The first level of information is of a problem-solving nature which shows the participants' help-seeking information behavior in certain social networks.

The idea of Redfield's (1943) 'folk society' equally impressed me to be coded in this category of information, in which the things are placed in accordance with an established standard, especially in times of problems. The bounded community life of the new refugees resembles the 'world of folk society' where participants' agreed-upon cultural, social and conceptual patterns form a way of life. This way of life is different from that of the members outside the community and impacts strongly the way they seek and share information. The study participants prefer the co-ethnic community members as primary and trusted sources of information in the case of health-related and financial problems. The case, where a participant became ill in her early settlement period and preferred to consult a senior female member of the 'Muslim community' for certain information supports the idea of folk society. She was in need of information about some traditional home remedies for fever and flu that she used to apply in her country of origin. She chose to consult this lady - before even browsing the solutions on internet or talking with the local health center - because they share the same ethnic and cultural background. She trusted the information without considering



the objectivity and criticizing the communal perspectives. Another example is, where an informant was in need of some monetary and informative support to buy and post a present for her mother on 'Mother's Day'. Her mother lives in Syria (home country) and she wished to buy and send the gift to her country. She had no clue about how and where she could approach the local post office and what will it would cost to post the desired item. She approached her friend from the Foody network - with whom she met every weekend to cook some traditional cookies and desserts- and seeked some help for money and information about the posting process. These two examples support Redfield's (1943) concept, where the study participants can be categorized as folk society members who seek personal types of information - in the face of problems (such as health and monetary issues) - from people belonging to their co-ethnic social networks.

Furthermore, the informants primarily seek advice about health-related matters, financial issues, difficulties with coworkers, cooking recipes and multiple cultural and religious practices from the co-ethnic social networks. Illustrations of such networks include the reception camp's ties, Muslim communities, Foody networks and the close family members and friends residing in Finland and in one's own home country.

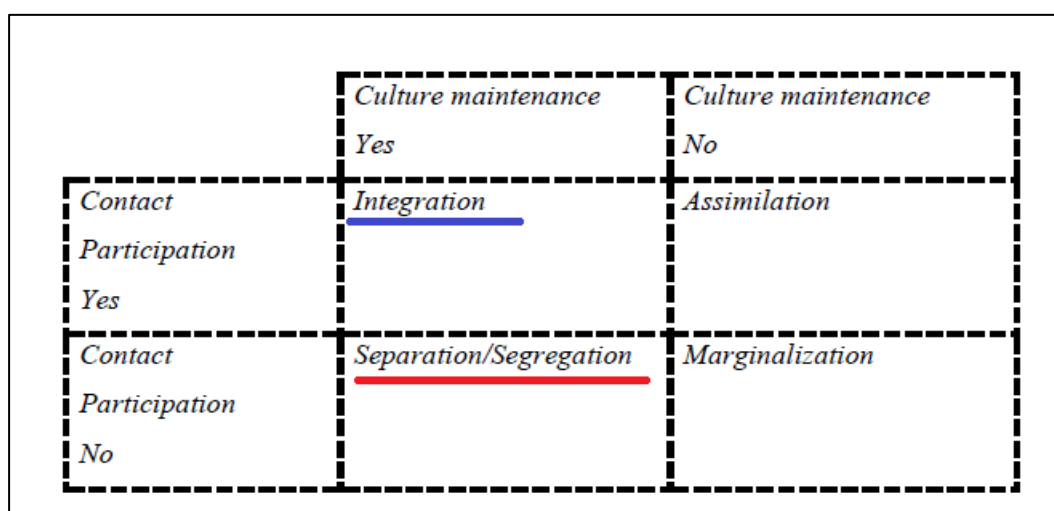
#### ***5.2.1.3 The World of 'Cultural-Similarities'***

In this level of information, a factor that heavily influences the participants' ability, preference and affection to freely seek and share problem-solving information in co-ethnic social networks, is the phenomenon of 'cultural similarities'. The theoretical support from Berry's (1997) theory of acculturation and the findings from the study participants' interviews are used to explain how the cultural factor impact the study candidates to build a 'separation' mode of acculturation and the small world of information.

This study particularly finds that the new refugees are apparently inclined towards the '*separation*' acculturation strategy of Berry (1997) (Refer to Figure 5.1). The amount of contact they establish with their own cultural communities is more preferred than with the host country's associations. The 'separation' acculturation category reflects less or no contact participation in involving with

the other cultural groups and the high maintenance for managing their own cultural identities. The findings demonstrate that the cultural similarities in terms of people's behavior, lifestyle (living style and food preferences) and festivals highly inspire the participants to establish specific social networks of friends of the same ethnicity and culture. This ultimately results in forming a 'separation' state and the 'small-world' of information. The newcomers spend more time in the camp's social ties, Muslim communities, foody networks and strong ties and trust the information obtained in these networks. This situation builds the 'world of cultural similarities' reflecting the 'small-world' phenomenon, where the participants are highly influenced by certain cultural factors and limit their sources of information within their own cultural groups in the society (Refer to Figure 5.2).

**Figure 5. 1 The Berry's (1997) model of acculturation strategy**

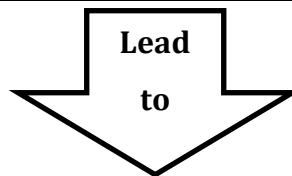


(Note: The 'red' highlighted aspect shows the study participants' 'Separation' preferences in this model, while the 'blue' highlighted 'integration' strategy is ideally recommended for the newcomers)

**Figure 5. 2 The Cultural Similarities relate to Berry's and Chatman's Theories**

| Cultural elements | Cultural similarities   |
|-------------------|---|
| People            | Our people are talkative, open, hospitable and friendly in everyday conversation. |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Lifestyle</b><br>• <b>Living style</b><br><br>• <b>Food preferences</b> | -We live in joint big families and friendly relationships with neighbors.<br>- Ingredients, taste, method of preparation of food is unique.<br>- Special dietary religious rules to follow in our culture.<br>- Certain food products are prohibited in our culture such as alcohol and pork.<br>-Collective eating patterns |
| <b>Festivals</b>   | -Muslim festivals (Ramadan, Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Adha) are occasions of family gatherings, fasting, cooking, eating, dressing-up and celebrations.  |



The cultural elements, mentioned by the participants in Chapter 4 (Findings), lead to the '*Separation*' strategy of Berry 's (1997) model.



The '*Separation*' of participants from other cultures ultimately results in the formation of '*small-world*' of information according to the Chatman's (1991) theory.

In my view, besides the cultural reasons, the candidates' personal preferences to adopt the new culture and the role of gender also play a necessary role in building the 'separation' and the 'small-world' circumstances. Berry (1997, p. 15) supported the idea that gender plays a significant role in the adoption of the host society's norms and culture. It might be difficult for a female to acculturate in a new society and to adopt the highly variant culture, values and patterns than those of her own home country. Since all the study participants are females, it seems difficult for them to lessen their feelings attached to their own culture and cultural people. It is not an effortless task for them to integrate themselves in learning the new ways of meeting and greeting others, understanding a unique lifestyle guide,

coping with new language, digesting and enjoying the new cultural food and following new festival ceremonies in an new land.

**Table 5. 1 (Level 1: ‘The Small-world of Information’)**

| <b>Nature of Information/Advice</b>  | <b>Sources of Information</b>   | <b>Promoting Factors</b>                            |
|--|---|---|
| <b><u>Problem-Solving Information</u></b><br>Health-related<br>Financial issues<br>Cooking recipes<br>Difficulties with co-workers<br>Cultural & Religious practices | <b><u>Co-Ethnic Social Networks</u></b><br>Camp’s social ties<br>Muslim communities<br>Foody networks<br>Strong ties networks | Location (Camps)<br>Cultural similarities<br>Gender |

I can safely summarize that the first level of information consists more personal and problem-solving nature of information needs. This develops a ‘small-world’ of information, in which the candidates prefer the co-ethnic social networks as a primary and valuable source of information seeking and sharing. The promoting factors, such as the location (camps), the cultural similarities and the gender lead towards the formation of a state of ‘separation’ and the ‘small-world’ of information.

### **5.2.2 The open world of information**

The second level of information represents the information needs of participants concerning general and practical issues, and usually occurs in the immediate and intermediate settlement stage. The more practical issues, such as housing, language learning, employment opportunities, weather survival guide, local health system, family reunion process and traveling rules etc. are the frequently mentioned concerns on which new refugees seek information from multiple sources of the ‘open-world’. The idea of the ‘open-world’ is captured by the

concept of the 'lifeworld', presented by Hebarmas (1992) and can also be explained by Merton's (1968, p. 447) view of the 'cosmopolitan'. Being a cosmopolitan shows having an orientation outside one's immediate social world to the 'great society' of national and international interests (Merton, 1968, p. 447). In this study, the 'great society' is the open-world of 'outsiders' - the local Finnish community sources and the other multicultural networks such as learning institutes, vocational schools, language cafes, community association gatherings and sponsorship ties.

The study participants are involved in some open networking groups where they build various social relations with the local Finns and people of other nationalities. The social and cultural exchange events and the meetings organized by community associations, the language cafes organized by NGOs and the vocational training gatherings arranged by the local language schools are some social platforms where the small-world and the open-world of participants meet and establish a friendly zone for mutual information sharing. Noticeably, the participants consider these multinational open-networks a source of finding the members of their own small-world, instead of mixing with the members of the 'open-world', due to certain factors, such as cultural differences and personal preferences. A candidate mentioned that she managed to meet most of her friends from the same country, language and culture, by attending the language cafes' events and the vocational training meetings occasionally. She found such events informative for only specific types of needs, such as learning the language skills, finding the suitable job and knowing about the local system. As far as her personal and problem-related issues are concerned, these social networks lack in providing a suitable environment. Consequently, candidates spend less time and limited energy to access these networks for seeking or sharing the information needs except some practical concerns.

According to Becker (1950, p 364) and Odum (1953, p 200), the insider/outsider perspective is merely a matter of 'mental' treatment, in which the members of different folk societies think, percept and feel variously. Accordingly, only one of the study participants considered the open-world of information useful for seeking the personal and the problem-solving nature of information and

sharing her emotional needs with the members of the open-world. This particular candidate had a different mentality than most of the other participants. She considered 'outsiders' to be the family members, relatives and friends from her home country. She deliberately chose to create an 'open-world' of the local Finnish and other nationals' social networks on social media and in person - while ignoring the connections with the same-ethnicity people in the city. She acknowledged that, due to some personal conflicts and clashes with her family, she intended to avoid meetings and talking with the people from her family and country. Whenever she interacts with the people from her country and same ethnicity, she smells and recalls the forgotten personal conflicts with her family. Therefore, she preferred to design a whole new world of multinational people - mainly local Finns - to get socialize with and seek both problem-related and personal information. In short, she is not a member of a 'small-world' of information and allows the information sources of an open-world to knock her inside-world.

The study results also reflect that the association meetings helped participants learn about some elements of the local Finnish culture, such as its local festivals (including Midnight Sun Film Festival, Ruisrock, Musical Events etc.), the way of celebrating Christmas, winters and summers, the traditional food, the coffee-drinking culture and the other happenings that reflect some general perceptions of the local culture.

**Table 5. 2 (Level 2: 'The Open-world of Information')**

| Nature of Information/Advice   | Sources of Information   | Promoting Factors                       |
|--|--|---|
| <p><b><u>Practical Information</u></b></p> <p>Practical information<br/>(housing, language learning, employment opportunities, weather survival guide, local health system, family reunion process and traveling rules)</p> <p>Information on finding friends of same ethnicity</p> <p>Information about local culture</p> <p>Personal and problem-solving information</p> | <p><b><u>Multicultural Networks</u></b></p> <p>learning institutes<br/>vocational schools<br/>language cafes<br/>community association<br/>gatherings<br/>sponsorship ties</p> | <p>Personal perceptions and choices</p> |

### 5.3 The persona of 'Sara'



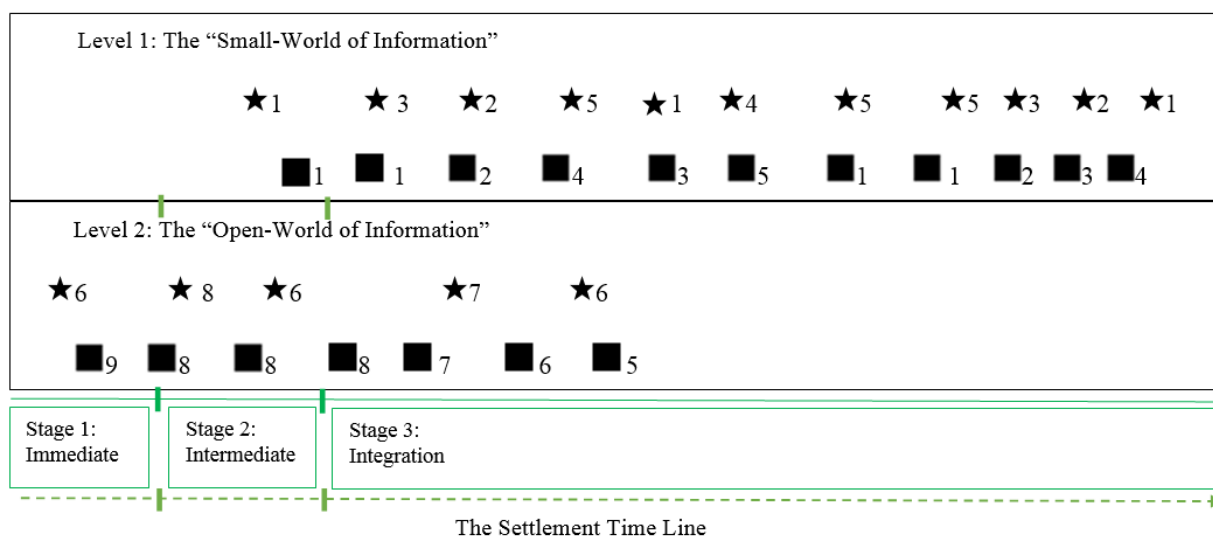
*Clipart: An imaginary image of Sara's persona*

I would like to paint an imaginary persona of a female new refugee in Finland - named 'Sara' – who represents the information world of the study participants. Drawing this persona can possibly help in briefly explaining and concluding the discussion safely.

Sara is apparently a family-oriented person who had to leave her home-country and stay in Finland, for the sake of protection and a better life. She is badly missing her home culture, tradition and religious activities that she used to celebrate and enjoy with her family and friends. Therefore, her primary interest is to find and interact with the same-ethnicity friends who belong to the same culture in Finland, which can make her feel at home and assist in integration in the host society. Figure 5.3 is drawn to present the symbolic representation of the levels of Sara's information world and her information needs and sources according to the settlement stages.



**Figure 5. 3 ‘The Symbolic Presentation of Sara’s Information-world’**



**Information Needs of Level 1:**

- ★1 Health-related
- ★2 Financial-issues
- ★3 Cooking recipes
- ★4 Difficulties with co-workers
- ★5 Cultural & Religious practices

**Information Sources of Level 1:**

- 1 Camp’s social ties
- 2 Muslim communities
- 3 Foody networks
- 4 Strong ties networks

**Information Needs of Level 2:**

- ★6 Practical information
- ★7 Information on finding friends of same-ethnicity
- ★8 Information about local culture
- ★9 Personal and problem-solving information

**Information Sources of Level 2:**

- 5 Learning institutes
- 6 Vocational schools
- 7 Language cafes
- 8 Community association gatherings
- 9 Sponsorship ties

★ The symbol of star shows different types of ‘Information needs’ of Sara.

■ The symbol of boxes shows different types of ‘information sources’ that Sara prefers.

The ‘information world’ of Sara consists of the two levels of information, i.e. the ‘small-world of information’ and the ‘open-world of information’ respectively. (Refer to Figure 5.3). These information levels appear in different settlement stages, divided into three different phases of immediate, intermediate and integration. The ‘integration’ is the most crucial, longest and on-going process in

Sara's timeline. Each level contains the different types of 'information needs' and 'sources' (social networks) that Sara holds in the multiple settlement stages. The symbolic visualization consisting of 'stars and boxes', refers to the 'information needs' and 'information sources' respectively and is used to complete the view of an 'information world'. The information needs and sources of both levels are mentioned in a numeric sequence along with the symbols. The information needs and sources and their frequency of occurring in a level is placed randomly for the purpose of an example. This study has no objective to identify the frequency of the information needs and sources of the newcomers. However, it could be an interesting future aspect to study which particular information needs arise several times in which level of information and settlement stage. Hence, Sara's persona shows that she has certain personal problem-solving information needs (such as health-related, financial issues, cooking recipes, difficulties with co-workers and cultural and religion practices), mainly in the integration process of the settlement. The information at this level is primarily produced by the co-ethnic social networks (such as camp's social ties, Muslim communities, Foody networks and strong ties networks).

Sara has a 'small-world' of information at level 1 - all her information requirements and the social networks she involves in - are limited to the 'inside' world of the same-ethnicity people rather than the world of 'outside' multicultural connections. Additionally, the time (almost 1.5 years) that she spent at the reception camp is the initial reason that she holds strong social ties with only the co-cultural friends. Further, the 'cultural similarities' among Sara's and her preferred networks also force her to establish a small world of information around her.

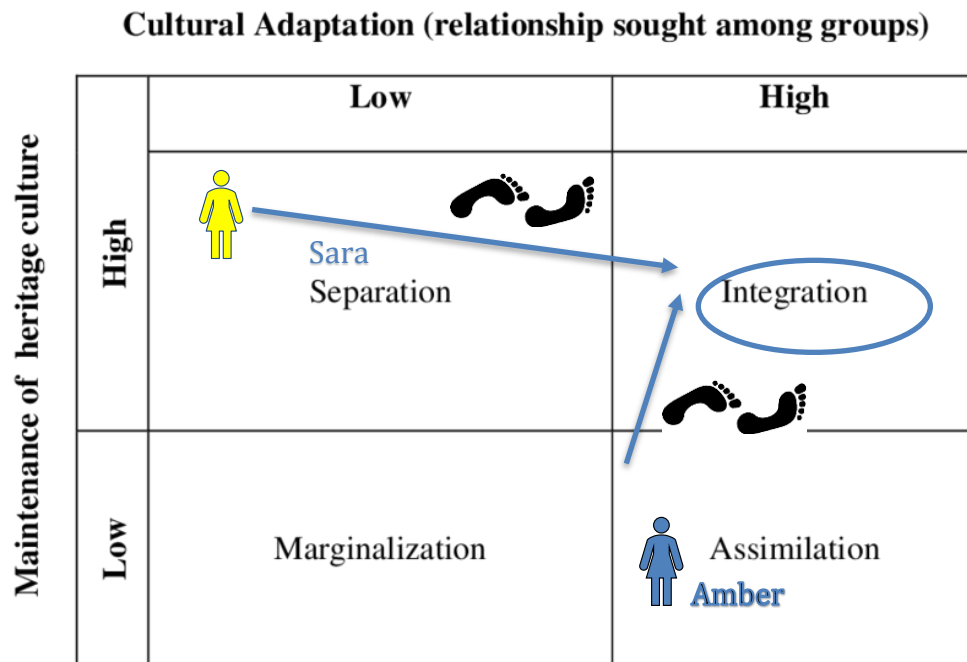
Regarding the second level of information, Sara's needs about the practical settlement issues, such as housing, language learning, employment opportunities, weather survival guide, local health system, family reunion process and traveling rules mainly appear in an early settlement stage and are produced by the sponsorship ties (the NGOs, volunteer churches, volunteer sponsors) and the community association gatherings. Additionally, the learning institutes, the language cafes and the vocational schools assist Sara in seeking relevant

information about meeting friends of the same origin and information about the local Finnish culture and the Finnish everyday practices. She is not comfortable in seeking and sharing personal and help-seeking information in these networks. She merely prefers to attend the multinational social gatherings for the purpose of attaining training and learning the language as a foundational skill to survive and live in Finland. In fact, she carries a limited interaction with the local people and their community associations at this level. The main factor that promotes Sara to consider obtaining and sharing information in these multinational ties is her personal perception and choice. Further, the 'cultural differences' – according to Sara's notion and the Finnish local community's lifestyle - is the barrier for her to consult the world of 'outsiders' frequently in the integration process. Therefore, one can see hardly any information needs and sources (stars and boxes) in the picture of the Sara's 'open-world' of information (Refer to Figure 5.3), especially in the integration stage in her settlement period.

It is important to mention that Sara represents all of the study participants in this research; except an exception where a candidate's (presumably named 'Amber') information-world contains the adverse picture than Sara's. For some personal reasons, she strongly assumes the world of 'outsiders' as the primary, practical, personal and problem-solving information source during almost all the settlement stages. She can be painted as a character who ignores the social networks of the small-world in high context. By interacting in various social activities, Amber might be able to integrate well in the local society, compared to Sara, but being an extremist is not an optimal situation.

From the perspective of Berry's (1997) theory of acculturation, Sara's intimacy with her own culture and background highly affects her integration in the Finnish society. Her attitude can be categorized as 'Separation' mode, as she is less interested in involving with other local cultural groups, while Amber's character seems to adopt 'assimilation' behavior with no concern in maintaining her own culture or participating in her own ethnic groups, but has deep enthusiasm for integrating in the host society's community groups. (Refer to Figure 5.4).

**Figure 5. 4 Berry's Acculturation Model**



(**Note:** Figure 5.4 shows that Sara and Amber are currently positioned at ‘separation’ and ‘assimilation’ levels respectively. The recommendation of this study is to bring these types of newcomers towards the ‘integration’ level with high cultural adoption among groups along with high maintenance of heritage (origin) culture).

Source: (Berry, 1997)

#### **5.4 Drawbacks of establishing the small-world of information**

In my view, neither Sara’s (representing majority of the study subject) nor Amber’s (representing an exception of the study subject) behavior towards a successful integration is ideal. An effective integration takes place when a candidate forms a fair balance between the first and the second level of information. The small-world of information encourages the participants’ separation from the local cultural groups, which might lead to unsuccessful integration. The ‘small-world’ and ‘separation’ behavior is not an optimal situation for the majority group (host society) nor for the minority group. This may result in refugees’ social isolation from the rest of the society and lead to ‘information poverty’. The theoretical support from Chatman’s (1996) theory of information poverty can be best suited

to describe the study participants' situation. Even though the theory presents several propositions, this study finds the concept of 'relevance' to be the most suitable form of information poverty in the case of new refugees. In this study, the informants seem facing lack of relevant information from 'outsiders' which could have responded to their personal-information needs as per the situation. The participants underestimate the applicability of information sources of the open-world and finite boundaries of a world of poverty around them. A few researches (Lamba and Krahn, 2003 and Hynie et al, 2011) also suggest that immigrants who maintain strong ties exclusively with groups of co-ethnics may face a social disadvantage and immersion in the cultural-specific networks. This can encourage the ghettoization situation in the host society.

As revealed from the findings, the participants consider their personal information needs to concern for example, health-related issues, financial issues, cooking-related issues, difficulties with colleagues and, most importantly, 'cultural and religious practices'. These needs are fulfilled by the co-ethnic social networks. They imagine that the people outside this circle of the co-cultural group are a source of irrelevant information in some specific situations. They feel more comfortable in seeking and sharing most of their personal and problem-solving information with the social groups of same-cultural people. They consider that the host community people would not understand their information needs concerning the cultural maintenance, due to the huge difference in the two origin cultures. Abruptly, this can lead to the phenomenon of a 'small-world' of information poverty where candidates might build a wall of a comfort zone around them and feel no need (irrelevancy) to consult sources outside the particular zone. They might refuse to accept or trust the larger society's (open-world) sources of information, which can result in an impoverished information world and poor integration.

## 5.5 Recommendations

In the latest report about 'Dealing with migration flows in Finland', Saukkonen (2016) has revealed that the ethnic segregation is modest in Finland as compared to other countries in Europe and there are also few signs of social and cultural isolation or religious radicalization in the country. My study results do not agree with Saukkonen's (2016) report completely. According to the findings of my study, the participants find themselves less-integrated in the Finnish society - from the '*cultural perspective*'. It is somehow natural for the participants (as humans) to choose co-cultural social networks for seeking and sharing problem-solving information, as they seem highly attached to their own cultural values, practices and groups. However, it leads to decrease possibility to remove the gap between the two levels (the small-world and the open-world) of information completely, but the gap can certainly be reduced with the assistance of an active 'cultural integrational' support from the host country officials and individuals. The integration is a two-way process in which both parties need to input their equal efforts. I understand the individual differences of preference and ability to adopt a new country's culture and people and, therefore, do not recommend the participants to force themselves to quit the co-ethnic social networks, but rather suggest establishing a balance between the Finnish cultural communities and the maintenance of their own cultural groups. This can avoid information poverty and social isolation for newcomers in the long run.

Furthermore, the Finnish Immigration Services should reconsider the processing time and the waiting period for the Residence Permit applications, especially for the refugees, so that they are not forced to be bound to the reception camps for a long time, but are able to join other social communities as well.

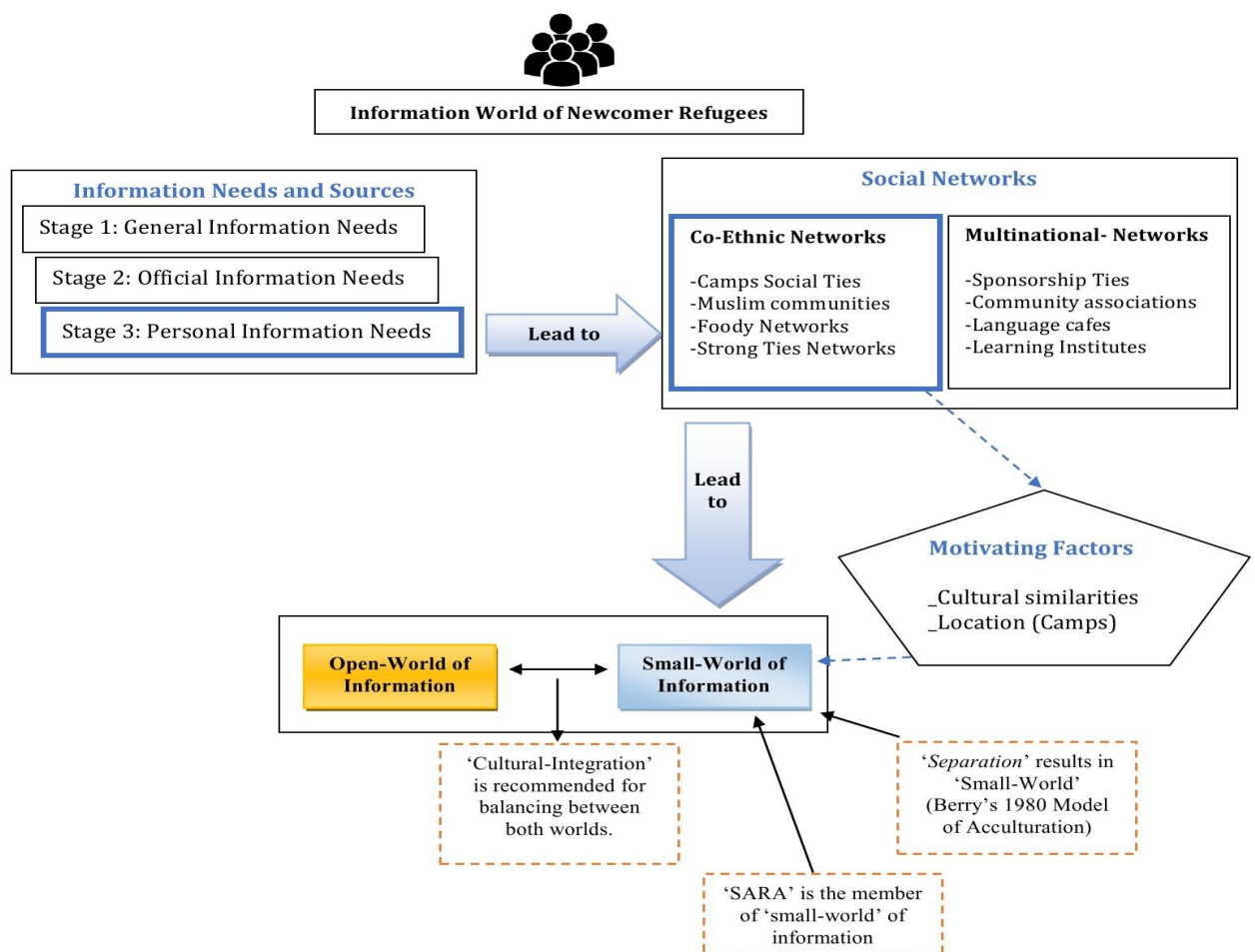
Since the refugees are in minority in the city, there is likely little possibility to arrange some cultural-exchange programs for refugees on a public note. However, private organizations such as the Red Cross, along with volunteer groups, can organize more cultural, traditional and informative events at the small level. For example, some arrangements for bonding between the refugees' Muslims communities and the local Finnish communities can be held in schools and

university premises. In addition, the integrated and educated refugees can become a bridge between Finnish society and new refugees, to create an understanding between both cultures. Obviously, cultural differences between countries do exist and they should not be abolished or forgotten upon migration to a new country. However, the purpose of such gatherings should be to introduce local people about minorities' cultures and their traditions. This can give newcomers a sense of multiculturalism and cultural integration.

## 5.6 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has discussed the relevant literature and the findings of the study. Figure 5.5 illustrates the overall objective of the study with the help of a conceptual framework. (Refer to Figure 5.5)

**Figure 5. 5 The summary of conceptual framework of the study**



This chapter concludes the overall research thesis. This research indicates the information needs and sources of the new female refugees in Turku, Finland. The general and official types of needs are fulfilled by the government and non-government organizations and the individual volunteers during the immediate and intermediate level of settlement. Caidi's et al. (2010) guide for immigrants' information needs and settlement stages was used to support the framework. The most crucial stage is the 'integration' where newcomers preferred to seek and share their personal information needs with certain social networks of the co-ethnic members. The co-ethnic networks contain friends from camps' social ties, Muslim communities, foody networks and strong ties. Chatman's (1991) theory of small-world best describes the situation of the study participants and their perceptions about building boundaries around their social circles. The longer stays in camps influence the newcomers' small-world of information, and most importantly, the 'cultural similarities' bring the members of other small worlds together in similar social connections. Berry's (1997) concept of 'separation' further supports Chatman's view, introduces the taste of 'culture' in the 'small-world' of information and shows how the newcomers' decision of a limited-world is highly impacted by the factor of culture. The new refugees are seen as socially isolated and separated from the host community networks and are bound to some co-cultural-limitations in terms of people, food, lifestyle and festivals. The persona of 'Sara' represents the overall research participants and is considered as a member of the small-world, which is separated from the people of the open-world, whereas 'Amber' is characterized as a member of the open-world (an exception of the study). The open-world is painted as a world of information resources from the multiple sources such as the Finnish community people, other nationalities people and networks etc. Hence, the newcomers are at risk of facing information poverty and social isolation by avoiding information resources of the outside. Thus, an effective cultural integration plan is recommended for reducing the gap between Sara's and Amber's perception about social integration in Finland and help them to utilize the information resources of the outside world.



## 6. Future research directions

This study has revealed some of the aspects of the new female refugees' information needs, social networks and their motivation to select certain networks in Finland. Since, little research highlights the information practices of the newcomer refugees in Finland, the following few future potential research (qualitative and quantitative) areas can help in the field of information studies and minorities studies as well. This study also opens the way for future studies in the area of culture and ethnic similarities and differences.

- This thesis has covered the information needs of the newcomers in terms of their general, official and personal needs during the settlement process. Each of these aspects could become the subject of a separate research in future.
- This study has focused on one aspect of the information sources (i.e. social networks and their various types) - as the main means of seeking and sharing information for new refugees. Indeed, future studies can focus on other means of information, such as 'The role of government and private organizations NGOs in providing the information to newcomers in the host country'. 'The role of 'volunteers' and 'settled/integrated old refugees' in feeding information to the newcomers and helping in an integration' can also be explored in depth in future.
- Most importantly, the study findings can aid future researchers to find out some possible solutions to an effective cultural and social integration of new refugees in the host land and what could be the information/communication strategies to reduce the gap between the small-world and the open-world of information of newcomers.
- Perhaps the most valuable study that can be drawn from this research would be a periodic study of newcomers' settlement timeline for five years. Such a study can examine the impact of the cultural similarities and the ethnic bonds in the early arrival stage, mid-settlement stage, integration stage and post-integration level. The integration stage itself has several levels that can be explored in detail. This might require an ethnographic or participatory approach of research.

- Further, this study has mentioned the concept of the 'information poverty' as a situation of lack of sufficient information resources of an individual, due to the creation of the small-world of co-ethnic social networks of an information around him/her. The future research can pick the idea of exploring more factors that lead the newcomers towards the information poverty. The 'information poverty' has other aspects besides 'relevancy' that this study has applied.
- This thesis has mainly focused on exploring the perceptions of the 'female' new refugees, which are significantly different than those of their male counterparts. Future considerations can be drawn upon finding the males' views about integration into the host country and their preferences for social networks. A comparative study, between male and female refugees, could also contribute well to the field.
- This piece of work has primarily focused on exploring the 'small-world' of information of newcomers, including their types of information needs, what social networks they use in small-world and what motivates them to create such a small-world in the host country. One interesting future work could be the way of finding the motivations of selecting an 'open-world' of information in depth. What are the reasons that newcomers tend to prefer the host society's networks to gain information rather own ethnic connections?

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## **8. Appendixes**

### **8.1 Questionnaire**

#### **Interview Guide: New Refugee Females in Finland**

##### **General Information on the Respondent**

- Name
- Gender
- Age
- Family status
- Education
- Occupation
- Legal status in Finland
- Time spent in Finland
- Languages spoken

##### **Introduction to the main conversation:**

- Please, tell about how you got to live in Turku?

##### **Main Questions**

###### **Settlement Stage: Immediate and Intermediate**

1) When you arrived in Turku, Finland, what was the first information that was important for you to know? (Immediate)

1a) What kind of information was important for you once you feel you have attained basic food, shelter needs? (Intermediate)

2) How did you arrive that information? By personally asking or by attaining from some people?

###### **[Respondent choses a mode, the following questions are adapted accordingly]**

3) **a)** If you asked, how did you choose the actual source?

**b)** If you looked for the source of the information, where did you decide to look for it?

**c)** If you found the information unexpectedly, where did it come from?

**d)** If someone approached you, who was it, where did this happen and under which circumstances?

4) Was your source friendly, easy to understand, respectful? Did it seem knowledgeable?

- 5) In what form/through which channel did you receive the information (e.g. conversation, brochure, website link)?
- 6) How difficult was it to understand it?
- 7) How did you feel during this encounter?

### **Settlement Stage: Integration**

- 1) After you settled more or less in Turku, what information was important for you to know in terms of integration with Finnish society?

### **Social Networks**

- 1) What type of social networks/connections do you have currently in this stage of integration?
- 2) How these networks are helpful in providing you information and what type of information you seek and share in these networks?

**[The further questions were built on the spot while adopting the participant's responses accordingly]**

- 1) Why do you think this social network is more useful for information and why it makes you happy?
- 2) Why certain network does not make you happy in participating and why do you join such networks?

### **Motivating Factor/s**

- 1) What are the reasons of selecting such networks for socialization?
- 2) What is your major motivation in choosing social networks? Or in other words, what stops you to not choose certain social networks? (barriers) Explain in detail.

**[When found that 'cultural similarities' and 'co-ethnicity' is the main common factor for all participants to choose certain networks, following questions were built accordingly]**

- 1) How do you define 'culture'?
- 2) How do you characterize own home culture? (Syria, Iraq, Somalia)
- 3) How do you characterize Finnish culture?
- 4) How do you define cultural similarities and differences among your origin culture and Finnish culture?
- 5) What are you likes/dislikes about Finnish culture?
- 6) What are the positive and negative aspects of your own culture?
- 7) Mention some details about your own culture and Finnish culture when it comes to integrate in Finnish society?
- 8) What makes it hard/barrier to integrate/socialize with Finnish people in local social platforms?

- 9) Do you have Finnish friends or other nationality friends? With whom you spend more time formally and informally?
- 10) What do you think about 'integration' into Finnish society?
- 11) Do you think that Finnish people should adopt or learn things from your home culture? Why is it important?
- 12) Why do you think 'people' as important part of culture?
- 13) Share some examples of Finnish 'people' experiences with you in communication and living?
- 14) Why do you think 'food' is an important element of culture? How your cultural food is different than Finnish?
- 15) Why do you think that 'festivals' are vital part of culture? Share some examples of your festivals that you miss and the Finnish festivals that you are aware of?

**Note:** The same Interview guide is being used in focus group and personal interviews. However, the focus group questions were not in much detail and interviews were conducted in more detail -with the help of this interview guide.

#### **Source of the Interview Guide**

Caidi and Alard (2005), Melnyk (2017), Kafi Anaraki (2017)

## 8.2 Other Appendixes

### Appendix 1

#### Appendix 1: The Summary of Thematic Map of the study

